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A G N E S .

A Nobel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IDA MAY."

"Lightly thou say'st that woman's love is false :
The thought is fals'er far ;
For some of them are true as martyrs' legends, —
As full of suffering faith, of burning love,
Of high devotion, worthier heaven than earth !
O, I do know a tale !"

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13 WINTER STREET.

1858.

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A G N E S .

CHAPTER I.

THE VALLEY FARM.

THE summer tempest had been severe, but short ; and the thunder having ceased and the wind lulled, the rain fell steadily in large, heavy drops, brightened now and then by sunshine, which, darting from behind the edges of retiring clouds, threw a sudden glory over the landscape. The bird-song and the insect-hum were hushed, for the myriads of happy creatures that fill the forest had crept for shelter beneath broad leaves or thick-spreading branches, and not the faintest breeze stirred the tree-tops ; but all the air was full of a low, musical murmur, — a perfect accord of harmony, given out by the vibration of differently shaped leaves, as the rain-drops struck them.

In the heart of the forest, where vines, weaving together the boughs of a bosky dell, had kept the ground dry notwithstanding the previous shower, a young man stood listening to this music of nature, so rarely heard because lost in other sounds, — so faint, and yet so exquisite that, once known, it must be ever remembered with a thrill of delight. He leaned

upon his gun, and at his feet a net filled with birds and a dozen brook-trout strung on an alder-twigg told what had brought him so far away from the abode of man. As the symphony to which he listened ceased, to be succeeded by the noisier music of the birds, and the babbling of a rill leaping down the hillside over the bed it had long left dry, he raised his spoils from the ground, and took his way homeward. He walked rapidly, with a firm and springing step, and a free play of the muscles denoting activity, and the strength of one accustomed to fatigue. His coarse, homespun dress, the hunting-shirt tied loosely at the throat with a bit of black ribbon, and girded around the waist with a strip of plain blue woollen fabric, rather heightened than concealed the fine proportions of his figure, and the charm of a face which, though not handsome, was attractive. The dark eyes beamed with intellect, and the lines about the mouth had a certain quiet power, denoting at once firmness and gentleness of character.

Though there was apparently no path to guide him, he went on with a readiness indicating his familiarity with the localities over which he passed; and four miles of this swift walking brought him to a clearing through which ran a road, rough, indeed, yet bearing the marks of recent travel. As he emerged into the circular space, overgrown with bushes, and spotted with charred stumps, he paused to rest; and at that moment an arrow came whizzing through the air, and quivered as it stuck deep in the tree just above his head. He started, and, raising his gun, pointed it in the direction from whence this hostile messenger came; but his purpose

was checked by a low laugh whose tones he recognized, and at a little distance the bushes, parting, disclosed the face of a young Indian girl.

She stood, half leaning forward, one arm extended to keep back the boughs that had concealed her, the other hand grasping her bow lightly, her dark face flushed and dimpling all over with smiles, her dress of bright calico contrasting vividly with the dense foliage surrounding her. It was a gorgeous picture, set in a frame of carved and glittering enamel; and the young man's features relaxed into a smile of admiration as he slowly lowered his gun. But still, as she came bounding towards him, he said, seriously, and with a reproving air,

"You should not do so, Lawontica. Suppose I had shot you in return for the trick?"

"Ha! ha! sartin Indian girl frighten him bad!" was all the reply the wild creature returned to this address; and she laughed and laughed, till the woods rang with a merry echo, and her companion was compelled to join her mirth.

"But, indeed, you should not do so," he repeated, when she became more quiet. "You expose yourself to danger. How could I know but an enemy was hidden in the bush?"

"Sartin enemy no shoot tree; enemy shoot *there*," she answered, touching her finger lightly to his breast.

"True, Lawontica; but he might have mistaken his aim."

"Indian no mistake!" she said, frowning with a jealous air. "White man make mistake,—Indian no shoot but once, — and then ——." With the tips of her dusky fingers she seized a lock of hair on the top of her head, and describing a

circle around it to imitate the operation of scalping, looked archly in his face, and again burst into a gleeful laugh.

“And you admire that sort of chivalry, you young barbarian!” said Percy Grey, half aloud, charmed to forget the savage idea in the airy grace and lightness of every movement by which she expressed it. Then, recollecting himself, he added,

“Are you going home now? Come along with me, and eat supper at the Farm. Fortunately I shall be able to supply the table with something eatable, and I must not linger any longer. I would have given a good sum last night for the game I have here.” As he spoke he held up the birds to her view, and his countenance became sad and stern, as if unpleasant recollections had been excited.

His companion noticed it, and replied, eagerly, with a corresponding change of manner, “Sanoso, all day he hunt, he fish,—no catch ’em anything. Dark come, Sanoso, one mile, two mile, three mile away. No reach ’em wigwam till many stars come out. No eat ’em supper, no drink ’em anything, ’cause she no hab ’em anything give white man. S’pose Indian women no hab ’em hand full, Indian women no come see Sagamow any more.”

“You are very kind, Lawontica. I did not suppose you knew of our misfortune. But we shall not need that you and poor old Sanoso should tire yourselves hunting for our benefit.”

“Indian girl see all, hear all. White brave bad — bad,”

she repeated, stamping her foot with a gesture of intense indignation.

“No doubt about that,” replied Percy Grey, arranging his gun and fishing-rod upon his shoulder; “but we have something to eat to-night, and if you will come you shall be welcome.”

“No, no! Lawontica’s mouth makes one. S’pose me go? — no. Me work ’um hard all day peelum little Moskevee* bark, mend canoe, so me go fishing tomollor.† Now me go shoot ’um bird, make old Sanoso say, ve’y good.”

“Good-by, then,” replied Percy; and after an arch gesture, menacing him again with her arrow, Lawontica turned from him, and he went on his way up the hill. From its brow he saw, in the valley beneath, the small, low farm-house which he called his home.

Its unpainted shingles wore the dark-brown hue of age, and except two noble elms standing on either side, and drooping their arms protectingly over the humble roof, there was little about it of beauty or grace. Behind it lay the farm, stretching away from the road along the rich soil of the valley and up the hillside; but, instead of the harvest that should now have been waving and ripening in the golden sunset light, the fields presented only a broken surface, with their cereal treasures trampled into dust, while a blackened ruin a few rods from the house alone indicated where a barn had stood.

The clear glow of exercise gave place to a darker flush on

* Birch.

† The Indians could not sound the letter *r* before the vowels *o* and *i*.

Percy Grey's cheek as he marked this devastation. But the execration arising to his lips was arrested when he looked towards the house, and saw several horses tied to the fence near, while a carriage stood in the road before it. Hurrying on, he saw that an accident had occurred which a servant was engaged in repairing. His father, a tall, white-haired old man, came out of the house as he approached, and upon meeting him said,

"Got back in good season, Percy. Been lucky, an't ye? We've been havin' a master shower; why did n't you get wet?"

"I thought I would n't," replied the son, smiling; "but who are these men?"

"Some travellers come in out o' the way o' the rain. They got upshot comin' down the hill. Ye see the hosses is skeery, and it makes it bad — master. The young woman is afraid to start again, for fear the storm an't over."

"There is a lady in the case, then," said Percy. "Where is she?"

"In the house, in the fore-room. Mother's been trying to get 'em to wait a while and have tea, and they could go on arter the moon rises."

"Your hospitality would be rather meagre, thanks to the last guests who entertained themselves at your expense."

"Don't speak on 't!" replied the old man, with a groan.

"Well, we'll have supper to-night, if we starve to-morrow," said Percy, and was passing on to the house, when, with a start of surprise, he added, "But who have we here? — Jem, my fine fellow, how are you?"

The person thus addressed was just rising from his stooping posture, revealing the sunburnt face and awkward proportions of an overgrown country boy of eighteen. The coarse features were now irradiated by a smile of pleasure at being remembered, and, with a familiar bow, he said,

“I know’d yer the minute I see’d yer. How come yer here?”

But Percy held out his hand to receive a hearty shake from the rustic, and asked, in his turn,

“How came *you* here? How are all the family at Chester Close?”

“They an’t to Chester Close at all, now. We’re all a movin’ down to York; for we hear tell the Injuns was a comin’, and they ’re wus’n the Yankee sogers to have for visitors,” replied Jem, with a sly grin. Then, with a knowing wink, he added, “The Squire’s in the house now, and *she*’s with him.”

Percy started, colored, and, turning abruptly away, entered the house with an eager step. As he deposited his game in the kitchen cupboard, where the empty shelves gave it ample space, he looked through the open doors into the “fore-room.”

The strangers stood together by one of the windows, watching the clouds which still lowered along the horizon, threatening to return as soon as the sun was set. Two gentlemen were with the lady of whom the lad had spoken. The elder seemed about sixty years of age. His figure was tall and stooping; the expression of his features disclosed more of benevolence and kindly feeling than of force or steadiness of

character, while the thoughtful glance of his calm blue eyes, and his unassuming air, told that his life had been little mingled with the momentous and exciting events of his time.

His companion was a man in the prime of life, whose handsome face and commanding mien at once attracted the attention which his haughty lip and cold glance as quickly repelled. Yet that glance warmed and softened as it rested on the face now half turned from him, as the lady addressed her father.

“Had we not better wait till we are sure the storm will not return? These good people seem quite willing to give us shelter; and if our horses were so terrified in the daytime, they would be still more unmanageable in the darkness. The roads are very bad, too. I confess I would rather avoid the peril, though you know I am not easily frightened.”

“The moon rises about nine o’clock, and then I think the sky will clear, even if the clouds do not disperse before that,” replied Mr. Chester. “Still, if you are afraid, Evelyn, we can wait, although, in the present unsettled state of the country, it seems to me far better to improve every hour in hastening our journey.”

“There has been no trouble thus far,” said Evelyn, hesitating between her fears and her desire to yield to her father’s wishes. “Do you know, madam, if there have been any troops along this road within a few days?” she added, addressing an old lady who sat knitting at the chimney-corner, — her invariable place, whether the space beside her was

heaped with blazing logs in winter, or dressed with hemlock boughs for summer.

The placid face beneath the snowy muslin cap changed with an expression of strong feeling, and her voice trembled a little, as she answered, "Some of the British king's soldiers passed here last week; and if thee looks out the window, thee will see their work."

"These barren fields! I wondered to see them. How could any one be so cruel!" Evelyn exclaimed, glancing around the humble apartment with its inoffensive occupant, and then at her companions for an expression of the sympathy she felt so strongly. But her father only murmured something in an under tone, and the younger man said, carelessly, in a low voice,

"These are the chances of war. I presume these good folks are rebels; and if so ——"

"Surely, you cannot justify such wanton destruction!" interrupted Evelyn, warmly. "What had these two old people to do with the war?"

"They may have a dozen sons in it, for aught we know," he replied; "and if not, it is impossible to help these things; so pray unbend your beautiful brows, Miss Evelyn, and don't take this case so much to heart. These are necessary evils."

The compliment was ill-timed, and could not efface the impression his words had made. Evelyn turned from him without replying; but the old lady, who overheard the last remark, said, "Thee is right, though thee does n't mean it. It is necessary. Thy king's soldiers might succeed better in the war

if our sons had not seen their fields destroyed, and their barns burnt, before they left home. Flesh and blood will burn to revenge such wrongs, though the Lord has said, 'Vengeance is mine.'"

"Perhaps so," said Col. Stanley, for such was the rank of her interlocutor; "but by your speech you should be a Quaker, and how is it you are advocating war?"

"Perhaps thee knows, by thy own experience, that our carnal natures are weak," answered she, a tinge of sarcasm mingling with her quiet tone.

Amused at this retort, he was about to reply, when his attention was arrested by seeing Evelyn suddenly color violently, and, with a slight exclamation, lean forward a little to look earnestly through the doorway. In an instant she recovered herself; but Col. Stanley's eyes followed the direction of hers, and, perceiving he was noticed, Percy Grey came forward. A mingled expression flitted over Mr. Chester's face as he saw him.

"Major Grey!" he exclaimed, in a tone which intimated that his surprise was not altogether unpleasant; and then he drew back, just touching the proffered hand, and added, with cold courtesy, "I am quite surprised to meet you here, sir. I supposed you otherwise occupied than your hunting dress would indicate."

Major Grey replied in an embarrassed tone, and his natural ease of manner seemed to have deserted him. "I little thought to find you here, Mr. Chester,—and Miss Evelyn, too," he said, taking the small hand that fluttered in his for

an instant. "I hope," he added, hastily, "that nothing unpleasant has driven you from your quiet retreat in the country."

"No; we have lived there unmolested until now; but it seemed advisable to secure a fortified retreat for the winter, as there are reports that the Indians may make some trouble, even if we have no more civilized foes. Then, too, my daughter may fancy the gayety of New York as an agreeable contrast to our country solitude; and if this glimpse of the world gives her a curiosity to see more, we shall probably go to England in the spring."

Major Grey did not answer for a moment. He knew the motive for this free disclosure of their plans, and his eyes sought Evelyn's with a timid eagerness unlike their usual clear and piercing light. She, after their constrained greeting, had withdrawn herself a little, and turned away her beautiful face with an air of reserve. This might entirely have prevented any further intercourse between them, had not Col. Stanley remarked, in a sneering whisper, addressed to her,

"Major Grey! — Pray, who is this major in homespun?"

The words reached the ear they were intended to wound, and, as Evelyn remarked it, indignant at the rudeness, she replied,

"He is a brave and honorable man. We had the pleasure of forming an acquaintance with him last summer. Shall I introduce you?"

"If Miss Chester calls him brave and honorable, I cannot

object," replied he, bowing gallantly, and speaking in the same under tone, as if unconscious that he was overheard; "but would not such a man find himself somewhat out of his sphere in the Yankee army?"

"'A man's a man for a' that,'" she replied, lightly, blushing to see the gleam which shone from Percy's dark eyes as he heard her vindication; and, anxious to prevent any further conversation of this kind, she hastened to introduce Major Grey to Col. Stanley. The latter bowed haughtily, and did not join in the general conversation that ensued, and which she, with woman's tact, contrived to make easy, notwithstanding the secret embarrassment of each person.

A short time after, Jem came into the room to say that the broken axle was mended, and to request Mr. Chester's inspection of his work; and the latter, with a forgetfulness at that time unaccountable to his daughter, asked Col. Stanley to accompany him. They went out together, and, as old Mrs. Grey had previously left the room, Percy was alone with the being he loved more than his life. He knew it was but for a moment, and seized it eagerly. Drawing nearer to the open window where she stood, he laid his hand on hers, which trembled, but was not withdrawn from its resting-place on the window-sill, and, in a tone he vainly struggled to make firm, "Miss Chester — Evelyn," he said, "we meet once more! Say, must there still be silence between us? May I not write to you? — may I not hope at length to prevail — to break down the barriers which divide us? You tremble — you turn away your head. O, Evelyn, is there no hope?"

“Alas, I fear not,” she said, faintly. “I have even regretted that I ever acknowledged my feelings towards you.”

“Nay, would you take away my life?” he interrupted, passionately.

“But you would not then have fed yourself with vain hopes,” she answered, sadly; “you would have learned, perhaps, to forget me, and to be content.”

“Evelyn!”

Tears gathered slowly, welling over from the dark, lustrous eyes, and the curved lips quivered and grew white with emotion.

“Forgive me if I have wounded you! However it may be, whatever other feeling we may each cherish till life shall end, I feel persuaded it is vain folly to persist in *hope*. My father’s prejudices seem more obstinate than ever, and the very bravery that is beginning to make your name distinguished even among brave men, is a growing obstacle to our union, since you are in the ranks they presume to call ‘rebel.’”

“You cannot discourage me,” Percy answered, pressing her hand; “my heart is like Pandora’s box — hope will remain in the bottom of it; and all the train of evil doubts and fears which accompanied hope have flown out, and are dispersed in air, now I have seen you once more, and read in your eyes, in your voice, in your whole manner, that your heart is unchanged. I will conquer yet, Evelyn. You shall be mine!”

Engrossed with each other, they had for a moment forgotten

that doors and windows were open, and their *tête-à-tête* liable to be interrupted, and each started in violent confusion when a hand was laid on Percy's shoulder. Mr. Chester, with a frown upon his brow, looked at him steadily for a moment, and then said, in a voice whose strangely-mingled tones would have impressed his hearers with a feeling of curiosity had they been less painfully excited,

“ Cannot I leave you a moment alone, Evelyn? Is it thus you abuse my trust, young man? Look at yourself — look at the state to which your home is reduced in consequence of your foolish adherence to a failing cause, and then look at the lady by your side, and tell me if you can think you have any right to say what you have said to her.”

Percy Grey's face grew dark with the crimson flood that surged upward from his throbbing heart; his eyes fell; and as he remembered his poverty, his humble home, the darkness enveloping his future prospects and the cause with which he had identified himself, a quick revulsion of feeling made him wonder at his own boldness, and he was ready to give up the hope he had so confidently vaunted a moment before.

But he looked up, he met Evelyn's gaze, and, raising himself proudly, answered, with sudden courage, “ Yes, sir, I have that right. I love her, and I will yet make a name of which she shall be proud ! ”

Mr. Chester smiled, it might be with disdain, it might be with pleasure, for the smile was blindly expressive. “ Valiant youth,” he said, “ it is a pity you have espoused the wrong side of this contest. With so much courage, you might suc-

ceed under other circumstances. Can nothing change your purposes? Such changes are daily made, and I have interest which would procure you rapid promotion in the British army."

Astonished at the audacious words so coolly uttered, for a moment Major Grey remained dumb; and then, unwilling to quarrel with Evelyn's father, he only said, "I think I must misunderstand you, sir."

"Can nothing tempt you to go where rank and riches might be yours — nothing — not even *hope*?" continued Mr. Chester, with emphasis on the last word, and a glance full of meaning towards Evelyn.

"Mr. Chester, you insult me, and you heap double dishonor upon me by insulting your daughter also! Can you really suppose what your words seem to imply?" exclaimed Percy, white with anger.

Mr. Chester did not seem to heed his wrath. Either he was in haste to depart, or he did not think it worth while to protract the conversation; for, after another of the strange scrutinizing glances he had repeatedly cast upon the young faces before him during this brief interview, he turned away and walked towards the door. To Evelyn, who stood by, mute and distressed beyond measure, he said, "Come, child, the carriage waits only for you."

Bewildered with excitement and mortification, she obeyed mechanically; but her name uttered in a tone of passion and despair recalled her senses, and, turning back, she took

Percy's outstretched hand. He pressed hers to his lips. His face was full of anguish.

"Forgive him!" said Evelyn, hastily; "I don't know what made him speak so; I never saw him appear as he has to-day. I know he does respect you, though he dared speak to you of dishonor. Forgive him, Percy, for my sake!"

But the proud spirit struggled still. "For your sake! — yes, anything else," he exclaimed, "but this! He has insulted us both; surely we are no longer bound to regard his wishes. Evelyn, I must see you — I must write to you — this parting is not final."

"Come, Evelyn, come," called her father from the door, in an authoritative tone.

"I must go, Percy, and I do not think we shall ever meet again — surely not for a long time; but there is something stronger, nobler, than hope — it is duty. Mine is to my father, who, in spite of this strange sternness, would die if I should desert him. Yours is to your country, and you will not prove recreant."

"Evelyn, are you coming?" called Mr. Chester again, and Col. Stanley's voice was heard saying, "What keeps Miss Evelyn?" At the sound she drew her hands away from Percy, and, forcing herself into calmness, murmured a farewell.

In another moment Col. Stanley entered the room, and offered his arm to escort her to the carriage. She could not decline the accustomed courtesy without attracting attention to her ill-concealed agitation; and, dropping her veil, she was

led away, leaving Percy petrified by emotions divided between indignation and despair.

It was characteristic of these two noble hearts that, though they had not met for months, though they parted never, perhaps, to meet again, neither felt it necessary to utter those protestations for the past, those vows for the future, which are demanded to satisfy a love less strong and true. Blindly as they were walking along the dark path of destiny, each had confidence in the other, and the troubles that environed them were not increased by needless jealousy and distrust.

Yet, as Percy Grey lingered at the window where Evelyn had stood, and laid his burning brow against the spot where her small hand had rested, he thought bitterly of this ill-timed visit to a home which the ruthless hand of war had stripped of every appearance of comfort; where poverty, hard and pitiless, stared him in the face; and of his own rough garments and toil-worn appearance, contrasted with the elegancies surrounding Evelyn in her own home, and the rich dress and easy air of the man who was evidently his rival. This contrast must influence Mr. Chester's feelings, if they were not already decided. And would it be reasonable to suppose that one reared amid the luxuries of wealth, utterly unused to toil, beautiful, and continually wooed to a sphere where her beauty could receive the admiration it deserved, could contemplate without repugnance the homely surroundings and the obscure lot which awaited the woman whose destiny was united to his? Then he thought of the low opinion of him manifested in Mr. Chester's attempt to bribe him to desert

his country's cause, and of Col. Stanley's careless scorn ; and, wounded in his honor and in his love, he ground his teeth together in a mood from which death would have been a pleasant relief. His mother's voice aroused him from his revery.

“ My son, thee seems troubled in spirit. Has thee cause ? ”

Half ashamed at having manifested his emotions, he answered, moodily, “ I am a foolish boy, mother. I aimed at the moon, and my arrow has fallen back and wounded me.”

“ Thee never was a boy to cry for a little smart,” she said, gazing into his face with a searching yet sympathizing expression ; “ and thee always manifested a gift to persevere till thee gained thy will.”

“ And so I can now,” he interrupted, his brown eyes flashing, and his lip curving, as he raised himself with a sudden strength and courage, his buoyant spirit rebounding from its intense depression. “ So will I now persevere and conquer. Bless you, mother ! you always have the right word to say. You have given me new life.”

Her face, still lovely, though it had borne the cares and sorrows of life far into the vale of years, grew flushed a little with pleasure at this burst of feeling ; but she only said, quietly, with her own calm smile, “ I know thee well, my son. But where did thee meet these friends ? I never heard thee speak of them.”

“ You can guess why, mother. When we were stationed at ——, last summer, the officers were quartered on its tory inhabitants, as they usually are, by way of taking toll for

their principles, I suppose; though I, for one, find it a very disagreeable method of retaliating my country's wrongs. However, in this instance I could not quarrel with my allotment, for Chester Close, my temporary home, was a little paradise, and its Eve — well, you have seen her! There is not another woman like her in the world, and never will be. But enough of this! Did you see how my day's hunting has prospered? I should enjoy eating some of those fish almost as well as I did catching them; for, mother, in spite of my hopes and my despair, I am hungry."

Mrs. Grey forbore to press him with any further questions, though her curiosity was much aroused; but, taking the hint, she went into the kitchen, whence a savory odor soon gave token that supper was in progress. Percy remained where she left him, and his gayety, which had been partly assumed, gave place to an expression of deep and troubled thought. Yet the gloom was not so intense as before his mother's words had roused him, and his mortification and anger was nearly forgotten as he dwelt upon those looks and words of Evelyn, that, far more than any vow of endearment, told of her unchanged regard. As he thus mused, a shout was heard at a little distance, a clear ringing halloo that echoed above the rattling of a wagon driven furiously down hill. "The noisy boy has come, at last!" ejaculated Percy, and went out to meet his brother.

They were the only surviving children of the aged pair, who had passed their two-score years of married life upon this farm, redeemed by hard toil from the wilderness. Mr.

Grey, a man of strong native sense and unconquerable energy, had been in early life deprived of the benefits of education; and though for many years before the war his lands had afforded him a comfortable support, he had always "earned his bread in the sweat of his brow," and had little leisure or inclination for mental cultivation. His wife, whom he had persuaded to brave the terrors of being "read out of meeting," came of a Quaker family, whose ancestors had been among the wealthy and influential in England, and in her girlhood she had mingled in the highest circles of Philadelphia society, and enjoyed all the advantages its schools could give. Afterwards her father became involved in unfortunate commercial speculations, his riches vanished, sickness and death followed to complete the wreck, and his daughter was supporting herself by teaching a country school when the blithe young farmer wooed and won her as his bride.

Of eight children who had been born to them, only these two, the youngest ones, now remained. Of these, Percy was two years the elder, and from his childhood he manifested a keen thirst for knowledge, which, joined with great activity of body and mind, a buoyancy of disposition and unflagging courage, justified the hopes his parents had formed that he would overcome the obstacles circumstances had thrown in his way, acquire a collegiate education, and make himself distinguished as a lawyer. To this end he was pursuing his studies in Harvard College, when the breaking out of the war and the siege of Boston made study impossible to the gallant youths who burned to deliver their country from the tyrant's

yoke. Percy immediately joined the army, and soon acquired such repute as a soldier that he had been promoted from one rank to another, until at the time our story opens he was "Major Grey," having been promoted from the captaincy since the summer during which he was stationed at Chester Close.

His brother, Franklin, a noisy, rattling, vivacious fellow, steady in nothing but his changeless good-humor and the firm principles of right in which he had been reared, appeared formed by nature for the soldier's life. Into it he had plunged with as little thought and as keen a zest as he would have carried into a "husking frolic," or a "raising bee." He was rather below the medium size, with a profusion of light curly hair, which was never in his life known to be smooth for two minutes together. He had blue eyes, like his father's, but gleaming over with fun; his features were good, and his face expressed such careless satisfaction with the world in general, and himself in particular, that all the annoyances and vexations of life seemed to flee at his approach, as shadows before the sun.

It might have been this contagious gayety that banished the shade of care from Percy's brow, as his brother drove up and sprang out of the wagon, exclaiming,

"Here, bear a hand, Major, and get the meal bag-out, or I shall swallow it whole! Hurry up your corn-cake, mother! I could eat four bears and a moose, and not choke at the horns either. Tell you what, Percy, there's nothing like starvation to give a fellow an appetite. Wasn't it lucky we

came home last night and found father and mother sitting by the fireplace, with not a thing in the house to cook for a supper, the well filled up with feathers, and nobody but 'moolly' to furnish liquor for the whole party! Tell you what, we never should have known how good milk tastes, if it had n't been for that. Upon the whole, foraging parties are a blessing."

"And burnt barns, and spoiled harvests!" suggested Percy, who while he was talking had assisted him to carry several bags of meal into the house.

"Well, upon the whole, if they must ride over the fields, they had better burn the barn. An empty barn all winter would be rather tantalizing, beside being cold for the cow."

"No barn at all, is colder."

"O, we'll build a shed to put the hay in. What a lucky thing it was the hay was n't hauled up from the meadow! But I recommend to mother to let the cow sleep in the best bedroom this winter. She deserves it for having sense enough to be lost that day, so these rascals could n't drive her off. Where's father, I wonder!"

"He went to look for that same cow, and here he comes. Percy, if thee'll see to the corn-cake, and fry the fish, I'll go milk," said his mother, as they approached the fire.

"O, don't set him at it!" exclaimed Frank. "He'd get into a brown study, and put all the fat in the fire, literally and metaphorically. I can cook as well as if I'd been through a dozen colleges, and studied all the ologies, including the doxology. Give me the fork. In fact, any fool can go through

college, but it takes a genius to cook. Now, see me turn this fellow! An't he handsome?" Then, in a rich voice, he carolled

"O, the jolly brook trout,
Bless his spotted side!
He's a pretty cretur swimming,
But he's prettier bein' fried.

I declare, if I had n't been born a Quaker, I should have been a poet; don't you think so, Percy?"

Thus he rattled on, singing snatches of verse and uttering his nonsense, with a mirthful twinkle in his eyes, and a hearty *abandon* to his own odd conceits, that made his gayety irresistibly contagious.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAIF.

“Boys,” said old Mr. Grey, as he seated himself at the table after having reverently asked a blessing on the food, “boys, I would n’t ’a believed, last night this time, when mother and I set wondering what on airth we should do, with the house all ransacked that way, and the grain spiled, and the cow lost, and nobody to help us do nothin’, that in twenty-four hours we ’d ’a had so much to be thankful for !”

His voice trembled a little as he spoke, and for a moment no one replied. Frank was the first to recover himself.

“Yes,” said he, “item one, the cow came home. Considerate cretur, she knew when to come. Item two, then we came, and, not havin’ eaten anything indigestible for supper — item three — we all slept sound as roaches. What a list of blessings ! And then to-night we have the extraordinary privilege of eating off the best china ! How much I used to think of that when I was a juvenile youngster ! We don’t often get so well treated when we come home, Percy. ’T was a good thing that blue delf was smashed. We shall eat off of china all the time now !”

His father smiled sadly. "You may laugh now, Frank, — perhaps you 'd as good laugh 's cry; but things looked master serious to us two old folks, I tell you. Ask mother if they did n't."

"It was indeed a bitter cup," said his wife, in a low tone, "but I told thee the Lord could sweeten it!"

"I think, if we had a little sugar or molasses to put in it, it would taste better now," muttered Frank, with a sly glance, as he stirred his cup of sassafras-tea with rueful grimaces at its unpalatable contents. A smile went around the table, and he added aloud, springing to his feet with sudden vivacity, "I'll bet! — maybe that molasses-jug an't broken. The rascals emptied the feather-beds down the well before they smashed the crockery; did n't you say so, mother?"

"Yes, after they had been through the chambers, pretending to think we had fire-arms hidden there, they came into the kitchen and wanted something to eat. When I went to get it for them, they began wilder than ever singing and swearing, and ended by destroying everything they could lay their hands on."

"Where is the great hook that used to hang in the porch? I've faith to believe there 's sweetening for *my* cup down the well!" and, with a saucy glance at his mother, Frank went out.

Finding the hook in its old place, he fastened it to a long pole, and in a few minutes they heard his voice announcing, in its usual noisy manner, that his search had been successful. Then followed a sudden silence. Percy went to the door, and beheld Frank standing with a crest-fallen air

contemplating the inverted jug. The well was not deep, and, being choked with feathers, had preserved it unbroken; but, alas! its contents had been poured out before it was thrown there. At his brother's laugh he turned, exclaiming, with a countenance drawn into a ludicrous semblance of grief,

“Now, you would n't 'a thought Providence would 'a treated a fellow so, after all my faith, and my works too! I would never believe it, for I an't used to being treated so; only, alas! ‘seeing is believing.’ There's nothing more to hope for in this world; my luck has turned topsy-turvy, like this jug!”

He pushed it carelessly with his hook as he ended this rhapsody, and it rolled against a stone and broke into two pieces. But at this accident his face changed from gravity to gayety, and he shouted, “Hurra! there never was such a fellow as I am for doing things at the right time! Now, none of the rest of you would ever have thought of breaking that miserable jug for the sake of the sugar; and mother won't scold me, neither, for she'll think 't was cracked before!”

“She'll certainly have every reason to think so!” said Percy, and they returned to the kitchen, Frank bearing in triumph the bottom of the jug, containing more than a pint of the moist sugar the syrup had deposited.

Having thus “sweetened his cup,” Frank seated himself to finish his supper; but it was doomed to another interruption, for, after a few moments of silence, the door opened, and an old Indian woman entered, followed by the young girl Percy had met in the forest.

“Qua, sister, how d’ ye do?” said one and another, as the squaw took a low seat in the corner of the fireplace, and Lawontica stood beside her.

She responded to the greeting by a few words in her native tongue which bore the same meaning, — “*Pocwenoc sewan queisis.*” The young girl raised her brilliant eyes with a quick glance for each one, and showed her pearly teeth with a half-smile; but she said nothing, and her manner was so reserved that Percy was struck with its contrast to her frank, frolicsome air a few hours before.

“What for you come, sister?” said Mr. Grey, at length, as she seemed indisposed to speak.

She fumbled with a bundle she carried in her arms, but remained silent, and Frank added, laughing,

“Perhaps the *young* sister can enlighten us, since the old one is dumb. Lawontica, my princess of the woods, what does the venerable Sanoso want to say?”

Another rapid, flashing glance shot from beneath the jetty eyelashes; but Lawontica was too well bred to speak before her elders had finished, and, having satisfied the requirements of Indian etiquette by her protracted silence, Sanoso soon replied, addressing Mr. Grey as if he had just spoken.

“Plenty times Indian woman come, s’pose she want ’um anything; but now me rich — white man poor.”

“You tell the truth, Sanoso; we are poor — master. Everything clean smashed up.”

“Sartin Sagamow ve’y good to poor Indian woman — ve’y good,” said Sanoso, with untaught delicacy of feeling, giving

him the title used for a chief, in order to express her respect for his misfortunes. "Plenty times s'pose me want 'um little sugar, little tea, little grease,* smoke 'um little tamahway,† maybe, always me get 'um, always white man say, take 'um, sister. So now me say, take 'um, sister!" and she threw off the cloth wrapped round her bundle, and displayed a plump hedgehog, and a brace of partridges, which Lawontica took from her hand and laid upon the table. Frank seized and held them up for general inspection.

"You are a reg'lar old copper-colored saint, Sanoso, if ever there was one," said he; "but I reckon it was Lawontica's bright eyes took aim at these birds."

Mr. and Mrs. Grey accepted the gift as freely as it had been offered, knowing that the slightest hesitation would wound the old woman most keenly; but Percy was inclined to demur.

"You will have nothing left for yourself," objected he, "and Lawontica told me that last night you had nothing to eat or drink in the wigwam. Here are two stout boys; never fear but they can take care of the old folks, Sanoso."

"Plenty, plenty! Indian woman hab plenty. No want 'um eat when white man hungry," answered Sanoso, hastily; and, with a quick sign to the girl, she glided through the doorway, and trotted off as fast as her old limbs would carry her, fearful lest after all her offering should be rejected. Lawontica followed more slowly, and did not quicken her footsteps upon hearing Frank's behind her. He had been sent to urge

* Grease. † Tobacco.

them to return and share the food they had provided ; but Sanoso was already out of sight, and the two paused for a little chat as they reached the belt of thick woods which skirted the clearing. They had been familiar companions from childhood. The tribe to which these Indians belonged had, some years since, become merged with other and more powerful ones, inhabiting regions remote from the white settlements ; but Sanoso, whose local attachments were exceedingly strong, could never be induced to migrate from the spot where her happiest days were passed — the woods, the waters, the glades, known to her early days. She was a widow, and, though her husband had been a man of note among their people, after his death she was thrown very much upon her own resources for support. A little experience had convinced her it was easier for one thus situated to live comfortably in the vicinity of the kind-hearted farmers around her, than when depending solely upon the chances of a successful hunt, or the scanty gleanings of the forest.

Therefore, after having several times left her wigwam solitary for months together, she had returned more than ever determined never to leave it again ; and though she was not forgotten by her relatives, as chance visits and presents of game testified, she had little society except when the young girl, her grandchild, came to visit her.

Lawontica was a princess in her forest-realm, and she was not unmindful of the pride of birth, which demanded from her, amid the toils and cares common to the lot of an Indian woman, a haughtier step, and an air of reserve befitting her

rank as the daughter of a powerful chief. But she enforced this deference when living with her own tribe, making little boast of it during her frequent sojourns with Sanoso, as she associated with her white neighbors. She was impulsive to the last degree, and had little of the art usual to the Indian, of hiding or dissembling her feelings. Indeed, she was so courageous and so proud that she would have scorned dissimulation, and her free, wild life had hitherto afforded little opportunity for self-discipline; but she was affectionate and kind-hearted, and, if there were darker passions in her soul, they had not yet been roused.

Sanoso's wigwam was nearer to Mr. Grey's farm than to any other, and she had been many times dependent upon his bounty. In return, her skill in woodcraft had helped to train his boys in the mysteries of snaring game, and of hooking trout and other denizens of the neighboring waters; for the old woman was an angler worthy to have been a disciple of Izaak Walton. No white man ever could regard an Indian as his equal, but upon the customary terms of superiority and inferiority these two families had associated for many years; and now Frank, whose absence from home had been protracted, had much to hear of Lawontica's simple life during the interval, and much to tell which he thought would interest her.

Therefore he was not a little vexed when, a few moments after he joined her, the twilight suddenly darkened round them, and a loud peal of thunder crashed over their heads, followed by a vivid flash and some heavy rain-drops.

“We shall have another shower,” said Frank. “Come, now, turn back and stay at our house all night.”

“No, no; Sanoso he old woman — much tired ebery night. S’pose he get wet, s’pose he all alone, much he say, ‘Where Lawontica?’” She glanced rapidly over the heavens, and added, “Sartin ve’y much rain he come. Go quick — maybe you get home ’fore you get ’um wet.”

“Pooh! what do I care for the wet? I’ll walk home with you, if you won’t come with me.”

But she insisted that he should not do so, and, to end the argument, abruptly left him, and disappeared in the mazes of the trees. It was useless to follow her, had he been inclined, and he ran towards the house as rapidly as possible. His father stood at the door.

“Would n’t they come back?” he asked. “Well, now, some folks says Injins is ungrateful, and I won’t say I have n’t talked agin ’em myself; but I’ll never say arter this but what they ’re every bit as good as white folks, if you only treat ’em well — yes, and a master sight better ’n some on ’em. But what a storm we ’re going to have!” he added, as another peal rattled over their heads. “It’ll be bad for them folks, with them scared hosses — master.”

“What folks?” asked Frank.

His father related the accident which befell the carriage whose occupants had found shelter beneath his roof, and described each person, particularly enlarging upon the beauty of the young lady. Percy and his mother were generally the quiet ones in the family group, but now they seemed unusually

silent and anxious. The darkness grew more intense every moment, the thunder pealed and crashed as if striving to rend the vault of heaven, and the low-hanging clouds were irradiated awfully with the incessant glare of lightning. Then came the rain, scantily at first, striking like hailstones upon the windows as the wind rose, and soon rushing down in sheets, in floods, as if disputing with the electrical forces for the destruction of the world. But the contest was not long. The thunder, growling and muttering, grew faint and fainter in the distance, and the rain subsided into a gentle shower, which pattered pleasantly on the roof of the lonely farmhouse, and filled the air with a delicious fragrance of moistened earth and growing leaves and flowers.

Percy Grey opened the door, when the rain had nearly ceased, and stood looking around him, as if listening for some sound from the darkness without. His father joined him there.

“I wish I knew them two women was safe in their wigwam,” he said, half aloud; “this an’t a night for women folks to be out, any way, — though I s’pose them two ’ll get along where anybody will, they ’re so used to the woods.”

“Sanoso can find a hiding-place almost anywhere in the forest, and Lawontica is young and vigorous; I don’t think they are in much danger, though such a wetting is rather uncomfortable,” replied Percy.

“Well, now, this has been a master storm! I never saw anything like it in *this* world, *I tell you!*” said Mr. Grey. He had a queer way of using this expression, as if he was

familiarly acquainted with half a dozen other worlds, and was giving the result of his knowledge as a piece of private information, by no means to be again imparted. But Percy was too anxious to continue the conversation. He walked restlessly across the room, to and fro, pausing occasionally to look and listen, until his brother said, wonderingly,

“What ails the Major? He is as uneasy as a toad under a harrow. What occasion has he to fret? Suppose the storm has been a rouser, — it’s over now.”

“He’s worried, I suppose, about them friends of his’n,” answered Mr. Grey. “So be I too — master! I wish they’d stayed here, as mother asked ’em to. I never know’d anybody to prosper that went agin mother’s advice. Mind that, boys! Them folks have been sorry since, I tell you.”

“So they have, or I miss my guess,” said Frank. “But, then, they could take out the horses when they saw the first flash, and the folks in the carriage would be safe enough. The others could ride into the woods and be protected. A little rain won’t hurt any of ’em.”

“But Evelyn — Miss Chester I mean — seemed very apprehensive, and I know she is not easily frightened. The horses must have behaved badly; we know the roads are in a shocking state for a few miles, and they must have gone very slowly with that broken axle.”

So said Percy, thoughtfully; but Frank’s cheery voice broke in, “To be sure, anybody might as well be killed as

frightened to death ; but after you get by the broken bridge, three miles from here, it is easy enough to get along."

"That broken bridge," exclaimed Percy, — "I had entirely forgotten it!"

He walked to the door again, and looked forth. The rain had ceased, and the clouds breaking away here and there showed glimpses of the rising moon, touching their ragged edges with silver. From the forest came a low, rushing sound of many waters, mingled with the fitful sobbing of the breeze, as it sank away to rest in the bosom of night.

"It is no use," he said, at length ; "I cannot sleep till I know they have safely passed that bridge and the rocky hill beyond. You will laugh, Frank, but I am going to saddle my horse and ride down there!"

This was received by his brother with the expected shout of derision, and by his father with a "Pooh, pooh! you're foolish, boy." He looked only at his mother, and she replied,

"I think thee's over anxious, Percy ; for, if any accident had happened within three miles, they would have sent one of the horsemen back before this time."

"So they would!" said Mr. Grey. "Mother always thinks of the right thing, Percy. I never saw her beat for it in *this* world!"

The supposition indeed seemed reasonable, and his brother reminded him of the fact that he had already walked twelve miles that day ; but they could not change his resolution. He seemed impelled to satisfy himself by ocular demonstration. Thinking of it afterwards in connection with the important

bearing which the result of this night-ride had upon his destiny, he could not help believing himself actuated, not so much by his own volition, as by one of those influences which we call supernatural, because a higher power seems to seize our will, and, in spite of our calmer judgment, move us whither it pleases.

“If you are determined to go, I will go with you!” said Frank, as he saw Percy preparing for his ride; and they went out together to the low shed joining the house, which had heretofore been used as a sort of outer kitchen, but now was compelled to perform duty as a stable. Here they found their horses, and, saddling them, were soon heard galloping down the road.

The three miles were quickly traversed. The stream was foaming high between its steep banks under the broken bridge, but there was no token of any accident, and they rode up the hill beyond, on one side of which a considerable precipice made the way dangerous in the night. As they reached the top, suddenly the moon shone out in full splendor, scattering the clouds, and revealing the road straight before them for some distance.

“There is no sign of any carriage; they must have driven rapidly before the storm came on. Perhaps they accomplished the distance between our house and our next neighbor’s, and found shelter there. I hope now you are satisfied, Percy!” said his brother, as they paused to take breath before turning homeward.

But Percy was looking earnestly down the hill, and he

directed Frank's attention to some object imperfectly seen in the shadow of the trees.

"Whatever it may be, it is not the carriage, so it is no concern of ours." Then, looking more earnestly, Frank added, "It is the top of a tree which has been struck with lightning, probably, and fallen just on the edge of the road."

"Yes," said Percy, "but I see something lying on the ground beside it. There, now the moonlight shows it more clearly; don't you see it?"

"I see something, certainly; let us go and find out what it is."

They rode forward. It was a human form, lying motionless on the ground. They spoke, but received no answer. Dismounting, Percy lifted it in his arms and carried it to an open place, where the clear light showed him a slight figure dressed in a suit of gray summer clothing, which alone had enabled them to see him. The cap had fallen off, and short silky curls, of that beautiful tinge between flaxen and golden, heavy with rain, were matted around a low, broad brow, white as marble; while the delicate features, the closed eyes, with long, dark lashes drooping on the cheek, and the relaxed limbs, made the boy look like an exquisite piece of sculpture.

"It is a mere child. How came he here alone?" said Percy.

"How beautiful he is! Do you suppose he can be dead?"

"He seems so," answered Percy; "he is quite cold, and I don't feel any pulse. Probably, when the tree fell it struck him, or the lightning killed him. How pitiful it is!"

“He may not be really dead!” persisted Frank; “they do sometimes revive. Open his vest, and put your hand on his heart. If there is any warmth there, we will pour some brandy between his lips; I have a flask in my saddle-bag.”

Percy followed this suggestion, kneeling on one knee and supporting the death-like head upon his arm. In the brilliant sheen that now fell over them, Frank saw his brother's face flush crimson, while he withdrew his hand suddenly, and said, in a low voice,

“The heart beats feebly; but, Frank, here is strange folly, or distress, or guilt. This is a woman!”

“There cannot be guilt in that face,” answered Frank, almost indignantly. “At any rate, we must save her life, if we can.”

They poured the brandy between the parted lips, and chafed the pallid hands, taking off their coats to wrap about the chilled form that lay so lifeless in their arms. Their cares were not in vain, though, had they been a little later, no human aid could have availed. After a few minutes, Frank detected a feeble pulse in the hand he held, and she opened her eyes with a struggling, gasping breath, and a faint moan of pain. But it was nearly an hour before she was sufficiently revived to be removed with safety. Even then she seemed unconscious, and Percy held her like an infant in his arms as they walked their horses slowly homeward. Her light weight was nothing to the strong man against whose breast her head with its golden curls fell helplessly; and, as they noticed her delicate beauty, the brothers perplexed them-

selves with conjectures as to who she could be, and what chance could have left her thus alone in the forest. Upon reaching home, they found themselves expected rather anxiously, after their prolonged absence.

“What kept you so, boys?” said Mr. Grey; “and what on airth, Percy — why, what have you got there?”

“A poor unfortunate, that we found half dead in the road just over the bridge,” he replied. “Here, take her carefully: she is hardly alive now.”

“And wet through, too, I s’pose, arter that shower — poor cretur! Now, this is bad, an’t it — master!” said the old man, holding up his arms. But Frank had already dismounted, and, rather unceremoniously pushing his father aside, took her from Percy, and, carrying her into the house, laid her down before the kitchen hearth, where a few embers were yet burning.

“Here, mother, bring some blankets! Percy, kindle up the fire! She must be chilled through; and, I believe my soul, she’s dead now!” he exclaimed, in alarm.

But she had only fainted with exhaustion; and the warmth of the fire, which was speedily kindled, together with the stimulants they gave her, as soon as she could swallow, at length restored both life and intelligence. She gazed about wildly, making a vain effort to rise; but, when the others withdrew, and she saw only Mrs. Grey’s pleasant face looking at her with sympathy and pity, she became calmer. She yielded to the firm, soft hand, which pressed her down again upon the

blankets, and lay quietly, her eyes half closed, without once asking where she was, or who was beside her.

Mrs. Grey could hardly refrain from tears as she gazed on that emaciated figure, and that childish face, so wan, so wasted, and with such a helpless, hopeless expression on the drooping eyelids, and the white lips, that quivered now and then, as if a spasm of pain swept over her. Going to the opposite side of the room, where the others sat silently in darkness, — for they had but one candle in the house, and were saving that for some emergency, — she said, in a low tone,

“The poor young thing must have had great sorrow; we cannot ask her about it to-night; and, father, thee had better go to bed, and you too, boys.”

“Go to *bedstead*, you mean,” interrupted Frank, “for we have no beds!”

“That is nothing,” said Percy, “as far as we are concerned; but I wish we had one for her. You mean to watch with her to-night, I suppose, mother?”

“Yes, she will need care. Thee can bring me in some wood to keep the fire, and she has a pretty good bed there on the blankets. When thee is gone I will change her wet clothes for dry ones, and make her more comfortable. Then, I think, she will sleep.”

Percy obeyed this request, and the three men retired to rest. Mrs. Grey went to her own room, and brought thence some towels and a suit of female apparel, with a large, loose flannel double-gown, which did service for all the family

in case of sickness. Approaching the stranger, whose large blue eyes dilated with a look of terror, as she saw these preparations, she said, soothingly,

“Come now, dear, let me help thee undress. If I rub thee well, this wetting won’t make thee sick.”

But she drew the blanket around her with trembling fingers, and, shrinking away, said, hurriedly,

“No, no! I am not wet; these clothes do well enough.”

“Child,” said Mrs. Grey, “thee don’t mean to say what is untrue. Thee don’t mean thee is n’t wet!”

“Well, go away, and I will change them myself; I am strong enough. If you will bring me some of your son’s clothes, — I don’t want these things!” she uttered, incoherently, retreating from her benefactor, and shivering with agitation.

“Child,” said Mrs. Grey again, in a tone of gentle rebuke, “thee must do as I say. Poor thing, thee need n’t fear me, — I am thy friend;” and then, with a faint blush at her own wounded sense of propriety, she added, “Thy sex is known to me. These clothes are better suited to thee than those thee has on now.”

As she heard this, the poor child sank down at her feet as if she had no strength to struggle longer, and, clasping her hands, murmured, feebly,

“Be kind to me, O, be kind to me! I have no friends!”

The slight air of constraint which Mrs. Grey had worn, notwithstanding her pity, melted at this appeal. She sat down on the blankets, drawing the prostrate form to her

bosom, and her caress seemed to unlock all the pent-up storm of grief in that young heart. Nestling closer in those kind arms, she wept and sobbed unrestrainedly, until her passion expended itself, and the blue eyes, half drowned in tears, once more looked up timidly to the face above her.

“I am very, very unhappy!” she said; “and I have been so long alone! I did not mean to trouble you——.”

“Thee did n’t trouble me, dear; but I grieve to see thee suffer. What ails thee, and why is thee dressed in this improper garb? What is thy name?”

“My name! — alas, I have none!” she answered, wildly. “No name, no home, no friends, in all the wide, wide world! O, why did they not let me die?”

“Hush, dear! thee speaks unadvisedly. Thee shall have a home here, and friends are soon made, if thee knows how to be friendly. I am sure thee can’t have been driven by guilt to this strange disguise,” she added, with a little of that searching look which had at first abashed her visitor.

“O, no!” she replied, while a hectic fire sprang suddenly to the pale cheeks, — “O, no! think me unfortunate, deceived, but indeed I was not wicked!”

“And thy name — what shall I call thee?” asked Mrs. Grey.

“Call me Agnes,” she answered, turning away her head.

From her manner, Mrs. Grey thought this must be an assumed name; but she felt the necessity of ministering to the wants of her strange guest, and, seeing that she had become calm, and seemed drooping again from the excitement she

had undergone, hastened to remove the wet clothing, rubbed her limbs with coarse towels till they glowed with a natural heat, and robed her in her own garments. She then rearranged the couch, and, covering her over with blankets, busied herself in preparing some gruel. Agnes lay watching her, without speaking; indeed, she was too weak to talk, or even think. As she yielded more and more to the pleasant feelings of warmth and security, the past, with all its pain and terror, faded from her mind; and when she had been roused to take the needed refreshment, she sank into a profound and dreamless sleep.

Mrs. Grey drew to the fire a homely but comfortable arm-chair, and seated herself, alternately watching the slumberer, — whose face looked so youthful and innocent in its perfect repose that it was hard to realize she could ever have been overwhelmed by the sorrows of life, — and recalling the crowded events of the last two days, and the new knowledge she had obtained of Percy's heart history. Thus she thought, until wearied nature asserted its claim, and she too fell asleep.

Thus Mr. Grey found them when, in the early twilight, he came into the kitchen. Awaking her, he assisted her to carry Agnes into their own bedroom. Still wrapt in the death-like slumber of utter exhaustion, she was unconscious of her removal, and the sun was high in the heavens before that trance was broken. Then she was burning with fever and racked with pain, and her kind hostess listened in per-

plexity and fear to the incoherent words which fell from her lips.

But Mrs. Grey's brave heart did not falter, though this additional care came at a period when she could ill afford the time and strength which it demanded. No physician could be obtained, and her neighbors, having suffered equally with herself from the ravages of the soldiery, were too much engaged with their own affairs to afford her much assistance. Still, she had considerable skill in medicine, and was unequalled as a nurse; and, being inured to watching and toil, she was able to attend to the wants of the sufferer without neglecting the household cares which devolved upon her.

"The boys," as they were called at home, made themselves busy in restoring, as far as possible, the comforts of which their parents had been deprived. The well was first cleared out, and the feathers, carefully gathered, washed, and dried, served to fill some of the beds and pillows from which they had been taken. Then the broken chairs were supplied with arms and legs, not always of the most elegant construction, but rendering them fit for service. Then a rude shed was built, to take the place of the barn which had been burned; and part of the meadow hay was hauled, because it was uncertain when they might be at home again, and the old farmer's horses had been taken away. These active young heroes could work as heartily as they could fight, and their willing hands and intelligent labor changed the aspect of things with marvellous celerity. The little money they had was reserved to purchase those necessaries of life their lands would have

yielded, had they not been wantonly trampled over. There was a field of potatoes to be dug when the season arrived, and some squash and pumpkin vines that were ascertained to have escaped the horses' hoofs, so the family would not want for vegetables during the coming winter; and the last few days of their limited sojourn were spent in a short journey to the borders of a lake a few miles distant, where they encamped, and commenced a vigorous attack upon the pick-erel with which it abounded, — an attack so successful that when they returned they brought a barrel of fish packed and salted for future use.

It was now the first of September, and the next day they must set out to rejoin the army. A heavy frost, unusual at that season, had made the air so chilly that a fire was comfortable, and the family sat around the kitchen hearth, whence a cheerful glow spread over all the room. This was square and low, with heavy beams across the ceiling, garnished with an abundance of nails, from which in winter were hung festoons of dried apples, peaches, and pumpkins. Opposite the huge fireplace a tall "dresser," with its drawers and shelves, displayed now, in scanty gentility, only the "best china," instead of the goodly array of delf ware, or pewter and tin, bright as silver, which had been the pride of the housewife. Between the windows a "settle," painted light blue, was leaning its ungainly proportions against the wall; and two or three straight-backed chairs, somewhat crippled in their nether limbs, seemed regarding it in dignified silence from the opposite side of the room, where a door opened into the shed. In

the centre of the floor stood a table bearing the marks of an axe, and upon it a brass candlestick, sorely battered, wherein burned a bit of tallow candle. The walls were stained a dull red, the beams and wood-work had become dark with age; but all was scrupulously clean, and the sanded floor and short white curtains at the windows helped to give the apartment an air of prim neatness.

In a rude arm-chair, of home manufacture, Mr. Grey sat on one side of the fireplace, conversing in a low tone with his sons. Presently his wife came softly from the other room and joined them.

"How is Agnes?" asked Frank, looking up from the pistol he was cleaning.

"She still sleeps," was the reply. "I think yesterday was the crisis of the fever. She has been rational all day, though so very weak; and when she wakes from this sound slumber she will be better. The danger is past now."

"I hoped to see her once more before we go," said Percy, "but now that can't be. You will keep her here, I suppose. She would be good company for you this winter, and perhaps some help."

"If she is really homeless, — and she declared herself to be, — we must keep her."

"She'll be glad to stay, I guess," said Frank; "and you'll be glad to have her, if she's half as good as she is pretty. It would be worth something to have her to look at."

"Thee owns the attraction of her face, then," said his

mother, smiling. "In truth, I felt strangely moved towards her from the first, as if a white dove had flown to me for shelter from a hawk; and now, after my care of her, I should be grieved in spirit to let her go forth. Her face is like an innocent baby's, and in all her raving she has uttered nothing unseemly for a pure and virtuous maiden."

"Has she betrayed anything of her past history?" asked Percy.

"Nothing definite. She has talked of her mother, and then moaned as if her mother were dead. It would pain thee to hear her. She spoke often of flowers, and trees, and running brooks, as if, poor young thing, she had a gift to notice in a proper manner what the Lord has made; but through all there ran a sort of distress which she could not tell; and when I besought her to speak it, she would cry or moan, and say there was only one who knew her secret, and when she saw him she could prove everything."

"Well, now, that's strange — master! Anybody'd a thought she'd told right out all about it when she was crazy," said Mr. Grey, whose curiosity was greatly excited.

"How great the pressure on her mind must have been," said Frank, "that she should keep the secret so closely through all her sickness!"

"Never saw anything like it in *this* world!" ejaculated his father. "It's strange — master strange — onaccountable!"

For a few moments no one spoke. The boys were busy with their fire-arms, and the parents looked on oppressed by

the thought of all that might happen before they saw their children again.

“I think you will be able to live pretty comfortably, even if we have no chance to come home again till next spring; and if the army should move south, you may not see us until then, for it don’t do to ask leave of absence too often. I was fortunate in getting that salt, — it was the last they had at the store; and now you have enough to keep some birds,” said Percy, “I advise you to lay in a good supply, if they are plenty, next month, both partridges and pigeons —”

“Partridges and pigeons, and pickled pickerel, with potatoes, might be palatable, particularly if provisions an’t plenty,” interposed Frank, with a comical look.

“And dried peas,” suggested his mother, answering his smile.

“You ’ll live like princes,” he added, laughing.

“Seems as if we ’d kind o’ hanker arter something fresh, though,” said old Mr. Grey, with a sigh. “At this rate, we shall be as salt as Lot’s wife afore spring. Howsomever, it’s the best we can do. ’T was a master hard thing, losing all that flock o’ sheep, last year; and, now we’ve been robbed o’ the beef critters, the Lord only knows where we’re ever going to get any fresh meat again.”

“If it was n’t for thy rheumatiz every winter, thee might get a deer now and then,” said his wife; “but we won’t complain. We shall be very comfortable, as thee says, Percy, for our house is warm, and we have plenty of cloth-

ing. I wish you two poor boys were going to be as well off."

"Things look dark enough, and I dread to think of the winter," said Percy, gloomily. "Congress either can't or won't pay any of us, officers or soldiers; and a great many are discontented, and talk of resigning. I don't know as any one can blame them, for it is hard for them to see their families destitute, and a cold winter coming on. Then, too, if something an't done speedily, there will be great suffering among the soldiers this winter. I am very sure many of them haven't a change of clothing, or an extra blanket for winter nights."

"Where's the Ginerel? Why don't he see to 'em?" asked Mr. Grey.

"He does all he can; but there is apparently a cabal formed against him, and his suggestions are not attended to. It's hard for such a man to see his opinions neglected, and his advice overruled, and the country going to destruction in consequence. I wonder at his patience. Why, father, at this moment there an't guns enough to supply all the army, and Congress won't provide them. It's a fact that the soldiers have marched to battle with sticks on their shoulders, carved out to look like guns, and watched their chance of getting a real weapon from some one who had been shot."

"You don't tell me! I want to know!" exclaimed the old man, with kindling eyes. "Do, for gracious sake, take both our guns with you when you go. They'll help along a little."

“O, no,” said Percy, “I can’t consent to leave you defenceless. What would you do, in case you were attacked?”

“Boys,” said Mr. Grey, with simple pathos, “I could n’t fight for my country anything to speak of, but I can die for her!”

The sons looked at him and then at each other, with dim eyes and a swelling of the heart that prevented words; but, by a simultaneous impulse, each grasped the other’s hand with a mental resolve which was never broken. America owes her freedom to scenes like this.

In the stillness succeeding these last words, Mrs. Grey’s quick ear detected a faint sound proceeding from her bedroom, which opened out of the “keeping-room,” as they called the kitchen, where the family usually remained. Taking the candle, she went in, and found her patient awake.

“How does thee feel now, dear?” she said, raising the feeble head that she might arrange the pillows more comfortably.

“I don’t know,” replied Agnes, in a voice far stronger and more natural than she had previously used. “How came I here? Have I been long ill?”

“My sons found thee in the woods, nearly three weeks ago, and brought thee here, and thee has been very sick ever since. Poor child, thee has suffered much,” answered Mrs. Grey, pityingly.

“Have I? How much trouble I must have been to you!” said the sick girl, looking wistfully around, as if striving to recall the past.

“Don't think of that, dear; thee's much better now, and soon thee'll be well.”

She made no reply, but her face grew troubled as recollection awakened, and, with a wild terror in her eyes, she exclaimed, at last,

“Have I been ill so long? — three weeks! How shall I ever, ever find him now? And the paper! — have I lost it? Where are my clothes? — O, kind lady, where are they?”

She grasped Mrs. Grey's dress with a pleading gesture that was irresistible, and the matron answered, soothingly,

“They are here — all here. Thee shall have them, when thee's well enough.”

This assurance calmed her, but in a moment she said, plaintively,

“If I might only see them, so as to be sure! Could I see them?”

“Yes, dear, if thee'll keep quiet. They are in the press.” And Mrs. Grey brought them to the bedside, adding, playfully,

“Thee was dressed in a strange fashion.”

But Agnes did not seem to hear her. With trembling fingers she drew the clothes nearer, and began to search in the pockets, and around the breast, for something she could not find. Then, suddenly remembering, she cried out,

“It is not here. I put it in my cap. Where is the cap?”

“Thee had n't a cap on, dear, when thee was found. Thee must have lost it in the woods.”

With a faint moan she sank back on the pillows, her eyes closed, and a ghastly paleness came over her face, as if she were dying.

“Lost! lost!” she murmured, feebly. “Then all is lost!”

CHAPTER III.

GEN. LEE AND GEN. WASHINGTON.

EARLY the next morning the brothers left home. The parting was sober and quiet, but not sad. They went forth to danger, perhaps to death; they left behind those whose existence was bound up in theirs; yet there was no word or thought of regret on either side for the hazard of lives which had been vowed to the sacred cause of freedom. Striving for a result so vast, they accepted the chances with a steadfast courage; and, if deep in the mother's heart a thrill and a pang gave token of what her suffering might be should those brave boys return no more, her face wore its usual expression of benignant calmness, and her voice scarcely trembled as she said farewell. Only, when they had left the door, as Percy looked back with a last wistful glance, he saw her press her hands over her eyes, and then raise them clasped towards heaven, and he knew she prayed for him as she wept. Such were the mothers of heroic sons.

Mr. Grey's farm lay among that range of hills in Essex county which border the level lands stretching away to the Jersey shore. Clothed in their native forests, except where

occasionally human enterprise had reclaimed the fertile soil, they rose one beyond another in undulating waves, heaving their leafy breasts to the sky, that appeared to lean down lovingly and clasp them with the glowing zone of the horizon.

Along the hillside and valley the brothers rode slowly in that early morning, over the broken bridge, and past the spot where they had found Agnes; and here Frank recovered his loquacity. Recalling, in his odd, rattling way, the events of that night, he dismounted and examined the shattered tree still lying there. The top had been twisted off by lightning, the larger branches scattered in every direction, and some of these falling upon smaller trees had broken them down. As he looked on, Frank wondered how Agnes escaped death amid such a scene of ruin.

He was about to follow Percy, who had ridden forward as he loitered, when his quick eye detected the lithe form of the Indian girl stealing away among the trees. He called to her, and, after a few moments of reluctance, she came to his side.

“You here, Lawontica!” he said. “How came you here so early in the morning?”

She made some indistinct reply. She did not tell him, poor thing, that her unsleeping eyes had watched his house ever since the moon had set, and her swift steps had kept pace with his horse’s hoofs behind the bushes by the roadside, that she might thus keep him a little longer in view. He imagined the meeting was accidental, and wondered at her hesitation and embarrassment.

“What is the matter?” he asked, kindly. “You look as if

you had been crying. Tell me — you and I were always good friends — tell me what troubles you !”

She looked in his face earnestly, and shook her head. Something in her expression made him add, “ Are you sorry I am going away again ?”

“ Many times white brave he go fight ; one time, two time, three time, he come back. *Last* time, s’pose he go, he no come back any more !”

Her voice was low and plaintive, and again her eyes filled with tears, which she struggled to suppress. Frank replied, gayly,

“ But this is not the *last time* I’m going, you know ; no, not by a long chalk. There’s considerable good fight left in me yet, before I’m made a target of. You’ll see me back safe and sound before long, you little beauty ; so don’t spoil your pretty eyes crying for me.”

The dark face was bent down, and as he sat on horseback he could not see the blush of pleasure that stole over it, or the brilliant light gleaming in the eyes he had complimented ; but she took his hand, and pressed it lightly and timidly between her own. The unusual action touched his generous heart.

“ You’re a good girl, Lawontica ; you won’t forget a fellow when he’s out of sight !” he said, with a tone of deeper feeling than he was accustomed to use in addressing her.

“ No, no !” she answered, eagerly. “ You mother, he say white man’s God he no like ’um fight, he no like ’um scalp ; like ’um all good, and love everybody ; so every day, every

night, me pray Saysoos * way up there, s'pose you go fight some time, he no let bad man kill you."

She raised her head, pointing upward as she spoke, and was so beautiful in her unconscious grace, that Frank, moved by a sudden impulse, bent down and kissed her forehead. It was the first time a man's lips had ever touched her face. She started violently, with a bound like a young fawn, and stood a few paces distant, her heart beating with such wild, uncontrollable emotion, that for an instant her whole figure trembled and swayed as if she would have fallen. But, before Frank could speak, she controlled herself, and sought to hide the delight which thrilled every nerve beneath an affectation of anger.

"Whoosh! away with you!" she exclaimed, pouting; "you come too near. Indian brave no do so — no *dare* do so!" she added, with a glance so full of arch gayety that Frank laughed aloud.

"If you don't like it, come and give it back to me. You won't? — Well, then, keep it till I return, and I will take it of you with interest. Pooh, Lawontica! you are not really offended? What is the harm of a kiss?" he added, as she frowned again and stamped her foot, with an annoyance no longer feigned, for his light tone had wounded her.

But she did not heed his proffered hand, and slowly, with a backward motion, withdrew to the shadow of the trees near the road, where she stood regarding him with a wistful, sorrowing glance. He was vexed with himself for having teased

* Jesus.

her, though unintentionally; and, too kind-hearted to be able to leave her thus, he threw himself from his horse, and, approaching her retreat, took her hand, saying, earnestly,

“Don’t be cross with me, for you know I like you ever so much, Lawontica! and I can’t go away and leave you angry. Let me hear you laugh before I go, for your laugh is musical and cheery as the sound of sleigh-bells. That’s right! Good-by, now, and remember you’re to think of me often while I am gone.”

He shook hands heartily with her, sprang into the saddle, and galloped away. She had laughed nervously as he spoke, but now tears poured over her cheeks like rain, and she stretched out her arms with a passionate gesture towards his receding form.

“*Migwe! day lumool! — yapchoo — yapchoo!**” she said, in the liquid syllables of her native tongue, and sank down upon the mossy bank at her feet to indulge a reverie of mingled pain and pleasure. Frank could not hear the fervent vow; he had no suspicion of the absorbing emotion he had excited; but, as he looked back and saw her drooping figure still in the place where he had left her, a warmer feeling arose in his heart than he had ever known previously for this companion of his childhood.

He overtook Percy in a little while, and they proceeded rapidly on their journey; but, being compelled to make long *détours* to avoid parties of British soldiers, who at that time overran Jersey, they were two days in reaching the army,

* I will remember you! — forever — forever!

then stationed at White Plains. Here Frank joined his division, while his brother went to Kingsbridge, where Gen. Lee had been placed to guard the rear.

This position was fully exposed to the enemy, and the commander, beside the ceaseless vigilance required to maintain it, exerted his restless and fiery nature in harassing the outposts of the British army. For several days Major Grey found little time for thought or sentiment, amid the fatiguing duties that occupied him.

The movements of the American army, slowly retreating from Haerlem Heights after the evacuation of New York, were much embarrassed by the deficiency of wagons and horses for transporting the baggage and artillery, which were continually liable to attack from columns of the enemy, who were often in sight. To protect these required constant skirmishing; but the troops fought courageously, the enterprise had been skilfully planned, and Gen. Lee at length brought his division in safety to join the main army at White Plains.

Here a general action was for some days expected, as Sir William Howe had a large number of troops posted within a few miles; but, with Bunker Hill fresh in his recollection, he concluded not to risk a battle where the Americans had a fair prospect of success, and quietly withdrew southward.

Gen. Washington now anticipated and determined to frustrate the design of the British commander, which was to march through Jersey to Philadelphia, and obtain possession of that city. Sending Gen. Heath, with a large detachment

to defend the passes of the Highlands, he crossed the Hudson with the majority of the troops, leaving Gen. Lee with about seven thousand men to defend the ground then occupied.

Several weeks had thus been employed, and to Percy Grey the constant excitement, nay, even the danger and discouragement of their circumstances, had been a relief from the sad memory of his private griefs, and from the rankling thought of Mr. Chester's last words. His gallant conduct, his reckless bravery, had won him distinguished approbation, which could not fail to awaken pride; and, since hope can never wholly die out of young hearts, there had been moments when, through the weary march, or by the lonely night-fire, his dreamy and enthusiastic temperament had abstracted him from the gloomy scenes around, to a bright realm in the future, of which Evelyn, with her wonderful beauty, her gentle dignity, and her entire sympathy with him, was at once the enchantress and the queen.

It was a harder task to be forced to comparative idleness for some weeks longer;—to see the army melting away by the departure of those whose term of enlistment had expired, and who could not be induced to a new engagement; to mark how the first zeal of patriotism was yielding to the pressure of poverty, hardship, and defeat, and to hear that even the personal efforts of the beloved and honored commander-in-chief had no power over the discouraged troops, who were deserting him by hundreds in the very face of the enemy.

Knowing that Gen. Lee had received orders to hasten to Washington's relief, it was a matter of surprise and annoy-

ance to his officers that they were thus delayed uselessly, when a day or an hour might be of infinite importance. It was therefore with impatient curiosity that Major Grey one morning received a request to wait upon his general, and proceeded at once to his abode.

He found Gen. Lee alone, amid his rude camp surroundings, seated by a pine table, on which were some papers, a map, a few stumps of well-worn quills, and a broken cup containing ink. He looked up when his young aid-de-camp entered, and motioned him to sit down while he continued writing. As Percy warmed his hands over a pan of coals, — the only means of heat the apartment afforded, this chilly day, — he had time to reflect on the strange position and circumstances of this brilliant soldier, whose meteoric career had already run through almost every vicissitude of life and fortune.

He was rather above medium height, and well proportioned, with a forehead betokening fine intellectual endowments, and eyes full of fire; but his nose was hooked like a parrot's beak, and his full lips had a cynical curve, while his coarse complexion, and the heavy formation of his chin and throat, gave him a sensual and unpleasant expression. He wore the dress usual to his rank, decorated with one or two military badges gained in Poland and Russia; but such were his slovenly habits, that every article of his apparel was more or less soiled and defaced. A large stag-hound sat near, resting his nose on the knee which had been surrendered to him, looking wistfully into his master's face, and bearing patiently the

hard pinches which his ears occasionally received. Other dogs, of lower degree, lay under the table and about the floor; for Gen. Lee had a passion for these animals, and he now alternately caressed his favorite and ran his hand through his own thickly-clustering locks, with such nervous violence that they stood out from his head in all directions. His whole aspect manifested such ill-humor and impatience, that Percy was not surprised when, having finished writing, he turned abruptly, and, with an oath, exclaimed,

“See there, Grey! Read this letter from Gen. Washington! Is that the way to write to a man like me? Am I to be ordered about like a whipt school-boy? and, after all I have sacrificed to aid this war, are my opinions respecting it to be thus set aside as of no value? I ordered Heath to transport two thousand men across the river, and apprise the general of his approach; but that great man, as I might have expected, intrenched himself behind the letter of his instructions, and refused to part with a single file, though I undertook to replace them with a part of my own. I sent him word I was commander on this side the water, and I must and would be obeyed; and he treated the message with silent contempt. And now Gen. Washington approves his disobedience, and orders me to proceed with the army. It is too vexatious! By heaven, I will take my own time for the march! Under these circumstances the order is an insult. Read it, my dear fellow, and see if you don't think so.”

The letter was as follows:

“DEAR SIR: I was just favored with your letter of the 30th ult. Having written to you fully, both yesterday and to-day, concerning my situation, it is unnecessary for me to add much at this time. You will readily agree that I have sufficient cause for anxiety, and for wishing your arrival as soon as possible. The sooner you can join me with your division, the sooner the service will be benefited. As to bringing any of the troops under General Heath, I cannot consent to it. The posts they are at and the passes through the Highlands being of the utmost importance, they must be guarded by good men. I would have you give me frequent advices of your approach. Upon proper information in this instance much may depend.

“I am, &c. &c.,

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

Having read it, Percy remained a moment uncertain what to say. Its temperate tone, so free from the impatience the writer might justly have expressed at a delay so hazardous, impressed him deeply; and he was surprised that its effect had been so different upon the irritable man beside him. At length, seeing the general waited for some expression of opinion, he said, respectfully,

“You will find us all ready to move whenever you give the word. General Washington must feel the most intense anxiety, and no doubt he is in great difficulty at present.”

“No more so than I am,” replied Gen. Lee, sharply
“Indeed, my condition is only better than his in that I hav

a choice of difficulties. If I stay in this province, I risk myself and army; if I do not stay, the province is lost forever. I have neither guides, cavalry, medicines, money, shoes, or stockings. Tories are in my front, my rear, and on my flanks. The mass of the people are strangely contaminated, and, unless something unexpected turns up, we are lost. Into this situation he has thrown me, and now I am not to be allowed to use my own judgment in regard to the time and manner of extricating myself! By heavens, North and Mansfield, if they had succeeded, could not have established a more odious despotism!"

Percy hardly knew how to frame his answer so as to express his sentiments without uttering something disrespectful to his general, and therefore only replied,

"Would it not be well to send word to the commander-in-chief respecting your opinions? He has often shown how highly he values your military skill, and I think could not fail to listen to any feasible scheme which would be for the benefit of both. At such a time as this, uncertainty on that point must be very trying."

"That is quite true," said his hearer, in a calmer tone, "but he might trust both my fidelity and my skill. I have not usually failed when thrown upon my own resources. I should have marched to-morrow, but have received intelligence that Rogers' corps, part of the light horse, and another brigade, lie in so exposed a situation as to present us the fairest opportunity of carrying them off. If we succeed, it

will have a great effect, and amply compensate for two or three days' delay."

"But these are not the general's orders," Percy ventured to say.

"And you think an old soldier like me should know enough to obey orders — hey, young man?"

"Yes, sir, since you force me to say it," replied Percy, firmly.

"Very well — the theory is good; but I am now on a separate command, and must use my own judgment. I have a plan which, if I can carry it out, will relieve Gen. Washington more effectually than my presence in his camp would do. If I receive certain information from New York, we may yet take up our winter quarters in that city. However, more of that by and by. The scheme is not ripe enough to communicate; and, meantime, I shall cross the river with as large a force as possible, and fall on the rear or flank of the enemy, as occasion offers. I have written several letters to the general which I think he cannot have received, since his last is so peremptory; and I wish you to take the one I have just completed, and give it into his hands. Then I shall be sure it reaches him. You will also take one to Gen. Heath, as you will be compelled to ascend the river as far as the Highlands before you can cross with safety. You will then take whatever course secures to you the safest and speediest journey, but I am told that after you leave Haverstraw the western road by Kakiat is most advisable. Further than

this I have no instructions to give, and therefore I wish you *bon voyage*."

While he had been speaking he sealed and directed the letters, and now, having received them, Major Grey rose to depart. The hound, who had taken a fancy to him, which he expressed in a dignified, patronizing manner, followed him to the door, but Gen. Lee recalled him with a tone so jealous that Percy looked back and smiled. The former noticed the smile, and said, half in sport, half earnestly,

"Don't force me to quarrel with you, Major Grey. Whether it is from a cynical disposition or a laudable misanthropy, I know not, but it is certain I have had a real affection for very few men, and you are among the very few. But if you are going to steal Poniatow's affections from me, mine for you will vanish."

"I am surprised at what you say of yourself," replied Percy, laughing. "A man who has given up so much as you have for the sake of a principle, and for the good of mankind, cannot surely be cold-hearted or a misanthrope. You wrong yourself, General Lee."

"No," said he, patting his four-footed favorite. "I have told you but the truth; and, paradoxical as it appears, if you will examine history, you will find all or almost all the enthusiasts for general liberty had the reputation of being cynically disposed. So hope nothing from whatever you may have supposed of me in that regard; and, I repeat it, be careful how you court Poniatow. I allow no rivals. 'Who steals my purse' (just now, in the depreciated state of

Congressional currency, and the probable confiscation of my English estates) 'steals trash;' but who steals my dog, let him beware!"

"I will be careful. But, surely, if I prove too irresistible to Poniatow, you will not punish my involuntary transgression so severely as to withdraw your friendship, especially as you have so many dogs left?" answered Percy, glancing at the half-dozen who had now collected around their master.

"Fine-looking fellows too, they are," Lee rejoined, surveying them with pride. "I am called whimsical and a lover of dogs, and I plead guilty to the charge. Until the common routine of mankind is changed, I shall wish to remain eccentric; and when my honest quadruped friends are equalled by bipeds in fidelity, gratitude, and good sense, I will promise to become as warm a philanthropist as Mr. Addison himself affected to be. But I am keeping you from your journey. *Au revoir.*"

Percy bowed and withdrew to make ready for his mission, and then set out for Peekskill, where, having delivered his letter to Gen. Heath, he crossed the river and proceeded towards Jersey. The British had possession of all the towns and roads near the river, and the necessity of taking a circuitous route, together with the bad state of the ground, which made rapid travelling impossible, so hindered his progress that it was some days before he could reach his destination. But he was pleased to find that the spirit of submission so generally manifested by the inhabitants of those provinces during the autumn had been effectually checked by the

license and outrages of the enemy; and, though the militia were so slow in answering Gen. Washington's earnest appeal for aid, their tardiness proceeded from timidity, and not from indifference. In many of the small farm-houses, where he stopped at night, he found hearts boiling with indignation, or mourning in hopelessness, as they spoke of the American army; and on some occasions, where he deemed it safe to reveal his connection with it, the women of the family sat up till morning to make their flannel sheets into garments for the destitute soldiers.

Gen. Washington had just completed his slow and painful retreat from New York to the Delaware, with the remnant of his army, now dwindled to less than three thousand men. Destitute of food or clothing, travelling with tattered garments and naked or stockingless feet over frozen ground and through deep snows, pierced by the chilling winter wind, lying down to their comfortless rest at night in many cases without blankets or tents, pressed by a victorious army, in the face of repeated disaster and defeat, without enthusiasm, and almost without hope, that heroic band toiled on, upheld by the magic of a thought, and by the strong will which conquers fate.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNRULY MEMBER.

WHEN Major Grey reached the American camp, at that time posted on the western bank of the Delaware, he found it in great confusion and distress. The soldiers were emaciated by the hardships they had endured, and in their tattered clothing looked more like a collection of scarecrows than like an army on whom rested the success of the most glorious struggle the world ever saw. The British lay in great force at Trenton, on the opposite side of the river, and the American officers were busy in establishing lines of defence at various angles on the banks, so as to hinder any attempt upon Philadelphia. The soldiers worked steadily, and, for the most part, without murmuring, though the dull despair of their faces was far different from the enthusiasm such a scene of hurry and bustle generally produced. Arriving at headquarters, Percy was ushered into the presence of the commander. He was at that moment in close conference with Lord Stirling and Gen. Mercer, but rose from his seat hastily, when a messenger from Gen. Lee was announced, and, seizing Major Grey's hand, exclaimed, in a tone of anxiety,

“You are welcome, sir! I hope you come to say that Gen. Lee is not far distant. His presence, and that of his army, are now of the utmost importance.”

“I regret to be obliged to inform your excellency that when I left White Plains Gen. Lee was yet posted there; but he has undoubtedly left before this time, and I am the bearer of a letter which will explain his delay.”

An expression almost like a convulsion of pain passed over Washington's face as he heard this reply, and for a moment he held the letter clenched in both hands, as if he would crush it; but the impatience passed away without further manifestation, leaving his noble countenance calm and dignified as before. Requesting Percy to be seated, he walked to the window and read the missive. It ran thus,

“DEAR GENERAL: I have received your pressing letter; since which, intelligence was sent me that you had quitted Brunswick, so that it is impossible to know where I can join you. But, although I should not be able to join you at all, the service which I can render you will, I hope, be full as efficacious. The northern army has already advanced nearer to Morristown than I am. We shall, on the whole, compose an army of five thousand good troops, in spirits. I should imagine, dear General, that it may be of service to communicate this to the troops immediately under your command. It may encourage them, and startle the enemy. In fact, their confidence must be risen to a prodigious height, if they pursue

you with so formidable a body hanging on their flank and rear.

“I shall clothe my people at the expense of the Tories, which has a doubly good effect. It puts them in spirits and comfort, and is a correction of the iniquities of the foes of liberty. It is paltry to think of our personal affairs when the whole is at stake; but I entreat you to order some of your suite to take out of the way of danger my favorite mare, which is at Wilson’s, three miles beyond Princeton.

“I am, dear General, yours,

“CHARLES LEE.”

“Good God!” exclaimed Washington, “and he can think of that at a moment when our men are dying of cold and hunger, and the salvation of our country trembles in the balance!”

His vehement manner, and the distress visible in his compressed lips and contracted brows, startled his auditors; for, such was the serene height with which his soul possessed itself in patience, that few ever saw him so deeply moved. Recovering his usual aspect in a short time, he continued, more calmly,

“Do you know the contents of this letter, Major Grey, and am I to suppose that Gen. Lee’s officers consider his course advisable, notwithstanding the urgency of my repeated requests?”

“I assure your excellency,” said Percy, “that we are all very anxious to move to your assistance, and we cannot account

for the present inaction. I had supposed, from some remark of Gen. Lee, that his letter would explain it to your satisfaction."

"He explains nothing!" replied Washington. "Would to God, he did! for it is painful to be compelled to doubt a comrade and a soldier, on whom such confidence has been placed. What do you suppose his motive can be, in thus delaying his march?"

"He thought it imprudent to risk the loss of the province by withdrawing so many of the troops."

"It is an ill-timed prudence!" rejoined the general, sternly.

"He spoke, also, of some plan not yet to be developed, by which he hoped to render you more effectual assistance than his presence would afford. I am glad to be able to add that I found, Lieut.-Col. Vose, at Peekskill, with three regiments, amounting to between five and six hundred men, who had come down from Albany, and are moving this way. They had been waiting a day or two for Gen. Lee."

"Yes, he speaks of them," said Washington, "but seems to imagine they have crossed the river. Gen. Lee's conduct is unaccountable, gentlemen, unaccountable."

"I am sure he cannot be aware how greatly you need him," said Percy, "and he would sincerely regret displeasing your excellency."

"Unfortunately, regrets, even if sincere, cannot atone for past delinquencies," said Washington. "The absence of his division of the army, just at this crisis, may be fatal to us.

The inhabitants of this state, on whose aid I counted, are either disaffected or intimidated, and the militia have cruelly disappointed me. The Maryland and Jersey militia deserted us the very hour their time of service had expired, although the enemy was then in sight; and the Pennsylvania troops have not yet arrived, except part of a German battalion, and a company of light infantry. In such a cause as this it is impossible to despair; but I cannot conceal from myself or you that our fortunes never looked so dark."

He turned away as he spoke, and, going into an inner apartment, closed the door behind him. Some further conversation ensued among the officers thus left together; and, although Percy, as in duty bound, endeavored to defend Gen. Lee from their extreme displeasure, he was forced to acknowledge his conduct mysterious and ill-judged.

Upon crossing the Delaware, General Washington had established his head-quarters at a country-house belonging to a Mr. Berkely. A servant of the family now entered with refreshments, of which they were all glad to partake. More than an hour had elapsed before the commander again joined them. Giving Major Grey a despatch for his superior officer, he said,

"May I hope that you will use all possible haste in delivering this? I shall be glad if you can this very hour set out on your return. Gen. Lee must be on the way before this time, and, therefore, your journey may not be as long in going back as in coming. I beg you to impress upon him the absolute necessity of hastening, if he would be of any service, and

represent to him our situation as you find it. I have ordered a large number of boats procured, which will be still retained at Tinicum under a strong guard, to facilitate your passage across the Delaware, whenever the troops shall arrive there. Meantime," he added, taking Percy's hand in a cordial grasp, "do not allow anything I have said to discourage you, or any over whom you have influence. Notwithstanding our present peril, I have hope for the future. My trust is in the God of battles!"

As he uttered these words his eyes beamed with a radiance that lit all his grave, firm features with cheerfulness and courage; and, standing there with one hand half raised, and his majestic figure erect, he seemed to those who listened like one inspired. From that hour Percy Grey never despaired of the cause which had such a champion.

The day after he sent away his aid-de-camp, Gen. Lee broke up the encampment at White Plains, and began his march to join the main army. Many companies in his own division were suffering greatly for want of shoes, and other clothing suitable for the inclement season. The roads were in a wretched state, and they were obliged to take a circuitous route to avoid a premature engagement with the enemy. Yet all these things could hardly account for the length of time consumed, and both officers and men were becoming impatient, and beginning to suspect ulterior designs on the part of their commander. These suspicions were still further strengthened when, after they entered Jersey, early one afternoon, he gave

orders to halt in the vicinity of Baskenridge, although they knew the British were but twenty miles distant.

For several days those most familiar had noticed a nervousness and abstraction unusual to him; and he started at every sudden salutation, and scrutinized every passing traveller, as if expecting to meet some one who came not. On this afternoon, as an officer remonstrated against the early encampment, he answered, with some asperity, that from this point they would move on fast enough, for he should no longer be undecided where to go; and, as evening drew near, he ordered his horse, and, taking a small guard, rode away over the fields, now buried beneath drifts of snow.

The country at this point was wild and broken, with steep hills and ridges, along whose narrow valleys ran streams swollen into rivers by the winter rains, and now hardened into broad sheets of ice. The path was narrow, and winding through deep passes where the laden trees sent down an avalanche of snow upon the traveller, and up bleak hill-sides, where their horses could with difficulty obtain footing; but Gen. Lee appeared to find his way by instinct, and at length came out on a road bearing marks of more frequent travel. Having passed a few-farm houses, he drew his rein at the door of one, before which a rude sign-board creaked dismally in the wind.

“This is Baskenridge, according to description; and this is White’s tavern, I suppose, by the music of this gallows-post!” he said, to one of his companions. “We will dis-

mount here, and may have to remain all night, if the person I expect to meet has not already arrived."

They entered, and found a small fire burning on the hearth of a spacious but comfortless-looking room, evidently used for the reception of visitors, and while they warmed their half-frozen fingers the hostess came in. Her appearance corresponded with that of her house, for she was old and untidy; but, at their request, she produced from a closet in one corner some very tolerable brandy, and promised to cook supper for them. Having replenished the fire, she left the room to attend to culinary affairs, and Gen. Lee soon followed her to the kitchen, whence the fumes of fried pork came with appetizing odor. She had not heard him addressed, and his rough face, ill-looking garments, and blunt manner, did little towards revealing his rank. Therefore, when he had ensconced himself in the chimney-corner, saying there were so many around the other fire he could not get warm, she entered with perfect unreserve into the familiar conversation that followed, and, in answer to his questions, told him the history of herself and family.

She had two sons, but they were gone to the war; her three daughters had married and left the neighborhood, and thus she remained alone in her vigorous old age to sustain the honors of the establishment.

"But where is your husband?" asked Gen. Lee, when she reached this point in her narrative.

"Well, he's bad as any on 'em — gone the hull time, and me a lone woman here. I'd about as good not have a hus-

band. But, there! he was to South Car'lina with Gin'ral Lee, and sence then he's wus 'n he ever was. He kalkerlates that are Gin'ral Lee 's about the biggest man in this 'varsal world — 'ud go through fire and water for him. I tell him he's a fool. I wouldn't risk my neck for nobody — I wouldn't. Here, mister, just take this ere fork, and turn them are slices o' meat, so they won't burn, while my hands is in the dough."

Gen. Lee took the proffered trident, and humbly turned the slices, and sat watching them while his hostess mixed some biscuit.

"Does Gen. Lee think as much of him, in return?" asked he.

"Lord knows! — likely not, I reckon!" she replied; "but afore *he* went away last time *he* was a braggin' about somethin' he was goin' ter deu, 't would put things straight. *He* thinks Gin'ral Washington an't the man folks tell for. Thinks he ought to be turned out, and Gin'ral Lee put in."

"Put into what?" asked her auditor.

"Into the head o' the army," said she. "That's what my old man 's alwus sayin'. Deu you know him?"

"Know who?"

"Gin'ral Lee. Ever see him?"

"Yes! I see him sometimes!" he answered, in a hesitating tone.

"Well, now, deu tell! Deu you think he's sich an orful great man?"

“He’s just about five feet, six, and large in proportion!” replied her hearer, with a quizzical glance.

She stared at him a moment, uncertain how to understand the answer, but her thoughts were soon diverted.

“There, now,” she exclaimed, “don’t you smell that are fat burnin’? Take it off! — it ’ll blaze! — quick! Thank you, mister. Now, I wonder if you ’d mind goin’ out to the well and drawin’ me a pail o’ water. Then, I ’ll bile the kittle while the bread’s a bakin’, and you can have your supper — you men-folks.”

Secretly amused, and caring little for this infringement of military dignity, Gen. Lee took the pail, but, before he went out, asked, with apparent carelessness,

“Has your husband been about home within the last month?”

“No, not for two months. He went away to York peddling.”

“And you have heard nothing from him since? Where do you suppose he is?”

“Lord knows! He ’ll turn up soon enough, I reckon. I ’m waitin’ for that are pail o’ water, stranger.”

Taking this hint, he proceeded to the well, and, having filled the pail, returned, opening the outside door into the kitchen just as Percy Grey opened the inner one, and stood petrified with astonishment at the strange figure the general made as he bent over his burden.

But, nowise disconcerted, Gen. Lee set down the pail at

the woman's feet, and, wiping his brow, said, coolly, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes,

“So, Major Grey, you've returned!”

“Yes, your excellency. I heard the army was in this vicinity, but did not expect to see you here. I have been riding all day, and seeing, by the sign-post, this was a tavern, thought I would stop to supper.”

“Have you been in the other room?”

“No, sir. I have this moment arrived, and the smell of the food attracted me this way. I have something of importance from head-quarters for you, Gen. Lee!”

“I've nearly finished cooking supper, and will attend to it immediately,” replied he, giving way to the laughter provoked by Percy's bewildered face, and the consternation visible in that of his hostess. She had listened in blank-surprise to the brief conversation, and now, comprehending her visitor's rank, fell on her knees before him, exclaiming,

“Lord knows, I had n't the leastest idee 't was you, Gin'ral! An' I made you cook the meat and bring the water! If *he* know'd it, he'd break every bone in my body!”

“He shan't know it, then, so you need fear no such catastrophe,” said Gen. Lee, restraining his mirth; and then, turning to Percy, he added, “You see, young man, the necessity of being careful to wear a fine coat. The most distinguished talents have no chance of being recognized beneath a shabby dress.”

He led the way to the apartment where his men were waiting quite impatiently for their promised refreshment, and

Percy joined the circle at the fire, having first delivered the despatch of which he was bearer. When Gen. Lee read it, his mirthful mood instantly vanished, and, though he made no comment, he walked the floor with a hurried step and excited manner, until called to sit down to the table. Even then he was taciturn and gloomy, frequently laying down his knife, as if he had forgotten to eat, and exhibiting other signs of secret vexation and disquiet, which fixed Percy's attention, and filled with terror the simple-minded woman, who thought she had offended him.

After their meal was finished, he ordered a fire built in a chamber, and declared his intention of passing the night there. When the hostess pronounced his apartment comfortable, he commanded the guard to be ready for an early ride next morning, as they must reach the camp before daybreak, and desired Percy to accompany him up stairs.

As soon as they were alone together, he said, in an angry tone,

"So, it seems, the soldiers are naked and half-starved, with a victorious army ready to attack them; and yet it is to be laid to my charge if they are destroyed!"

"Does Gen. Washington say so?" asked Percy, gravely.

"He implies as much. He speaks of my 'unaccountable delay, as if *I* could esteem myself tied up to the letter of instructions, without any discretionary power! An old soldier like me! If they had listened to my advice in the matter of evacuating those forts, they would not have been thus destitute and perishing. The world will know some day

the respective merits of the servants of America. The temporary power of office, and the tinsel dignity attending it, will not be always able to offuscate the bright rays of truth. Gen. Washington has no right to distrust me, or poison the minds of people against me. I think I may at least venture to hope that you, Major Grey, said nothing to induce the strangely cold letter he has seen fit to write in reply to the friendly missive, wherein I thought I had explained everything to his satisfaction?"

"I am hurt that you should ask the question," said Percy, warmly. "Gen. Washington seemed intensely disappointed, and more excited than I ever saw him before, and I assure you I regretted it was not in my power to explain more satisfactorily the cause of your delay. Fortunately, our conversation, the morning I left you, supplied me with some information on the subject; and I told him you expected to be able to divert the enemy from him, and, moreover, that you did not think it prudent to leave the province of New York undefended."

"What did he say to that?" asked Gen. Lee.

"He thought it an ill-timed prudence —"

"By heaven!" interrupted his hearer, "I know of no man who has more of that rascally virtue than his excellency, and he might therefore be able to excuse it in another. I could not fully explain my motive, or my plan; but I thought the one was above suspicion, and I knew the other would vindicate itself. It is shameful—it is abominable!" he added, with an oath; "and the country, for which I have given up so much,

owes me something better than this. I have always honored Gen. Washington, but, if he chooses to claim the homage due to an infallible divinity, I shall surely prove a heretic ; and, if he wounds everything I hold dear, he must thank himself if his deityship gets scratched in the scuffle !”

“ I think you magnify the difficulty,” said Percy. “ The army is very feeble, and, of course, your assistance is intensely desired ; and that should account for any slight impatience on the part of those who are expecting you. But I am certain they cannot doubt or suspect you, as your words seem to indicate. If there is any mystery, you will be able to satisfy every one it was unavoidable.”

Gen. Lee’s fiery nature was easily roused, but his anger was seldom lasting, and his voice took a milder tone, as he answered,

“ I can do so ;— nay, I will now partly explain to you what has seemed so strange. When I came up from the south I chanced to stop one night at a house, not far from here, where I met a man by the name of White, the owner of this place, in fact, who had been in the southern army, and, with how much justice I will not pretend to say, had formed a most exalted idea of its commander. He was willing to undertake the risk of bearing a letter from me to a gentleman, then in New York, whom I knew long ago in England, and with whom I have had some communication since I arrived in this country. I had, even then, a plan half formed, which only required certain information I was sure he could obtain, in order to enable me triumphantly to forward our cause. I

sent this White to York, fitted out as a pedler, and he was to join me at White Plains, or, if that was impossible, I could find him here at this time. Therefore I lingered in my encampment, and have delayed the march that he might be able to overtake us, if he reached there after we left. But he did not come; he has not been here; and now I am doubly disappointed, because the course of events during the last two months has made the brilliant stroke I contemplated more than ever necessary to the success of the war. But I was born under an unlucky star, and nothing I touch prospers! Sometimes I think the best thing I could do for this country would be to put a few bits of lead through my brains."

Percy endeavored to cheer the despondency which had thus followed extreme vexation, and was so far successful that, when at a late hour he left him for the repose his toilsome journey had rendered necessary, Gen. Lee spoke hopefully of making a forced march, during the next twenty-four hours, to the spot where boats had been stationed to convey his army across the Delaware.

Calling the hostess, who approached with a frightened manner, as if expecting to be "court-martialed" on the spot, Percy asked for a light, and followed her to a closet under the eaves of the low roof, where a bed had been made on the floor for his accommodation. He threw himself upon it without undressing, and in a moment was fast asleep.

Several hours had passed, when his dreamless rest was disturbed by the sudden noise of shouts and the clash of arms

outside the house. He sprang up, and, groping across the entry to a window, saw that the first gleams of early sunshine were struggling through the sky, but from his position he could not ascertain whence the noise proceeded. Feeling his way as rapidly as possible along the obscure passage, he entered Gen. Lee's room, the door of which was partly open. Its inmate stood in the middle of the floor, half dressed, with his cloak wrapped about him. He had evidently just risen from his bed, and was now listening intently for a repetition of the sounds that had aroused him.

“What is this, General?” said Percy. “Are we betrayed?”

“I don't know — the noise is receding. The windows are so frosty I can see nothing. Where is the guard?” he asked, hurriedly, yet with entire self-possession.

Percy raised the curtain from the upper part of the window, and found a small place clear from the thick coating which covered the other panes. He enlarged the opening with his breath, and saw the guard scampering ingloriously in various directions, chased by a party of British dragoons.

“It is the enemy! We *are* betrayed!” he exclaimed. “General, you must escape, if possible, for it is useless to think of resistance; the guard have fled!”

“Curse the cowards!” muttered Gen. Lee. “If that is the case, probably escape is not possible. We have no choice but to stay here, and be caught like rats in a hole.”

At this moment there was the sound of fighting in the entry below stairs. Pistols were fired and sabres clashed, and

one or two officers who had been left, with those of the guard who disdained to fly, were slowly pressed by overwhelming numbers up the stairs. There they had stationed themselves, in the faint hope that while they fought their general might escape from the house by some other way. This idea occurred to Percy, but before he could utter it Gen. Lee had rendered it of no avail, by springing to the head of the stairs, and cheering on his defenders as he rushed into the affray. At sight of him, his pursuers charged with new zeal, and, in another moment, he was brought back to the chamber a prisoner, with all his companions.

Col. Harcourt, who commanded the dragoons, was a fine-looking, noble-hearted soldier, and he restrained the taunts and vauntings in which some of the captors were disposed to indulge; but, fearful that those who had fled might bring their army to the rescue, he hastily gathered up the papers lying on the table, and ordered an instant departure, scarcely allowing Gen. Lee time to put on his clothes. And thus, in most unmilitary style, the hero of Villa Velha and Niester, the gallant supporter of American liberty, was borne away to the camp of his countrymen.

As they were leaving the door, horses having been found for the few prisoners, the slatternly old woman again appeared. Rushing from behind a door, where she had hidden during the contest, she threw herself on the snow, and caught hold of the general's foot as it rested in the stirrup.

“O, 't wan't me! — 't wan't! — Lord knows 't wan't!”

she cried. "I never thought he'd tell!—an' I was so skeered to find how I'd been a talkin' to you!"

"Who was it, then?" interrupted Gen. Lee, sternly looking down upon her.

"Why, Tom! He came in jest arter you went in t' other room, an' I's so skeered I tell'd him all about it, an' he must a gone an' tell'd, for he went right out. O, Gin'ral, Lord knows I did n't mean no harm! What'll *he* say, when he comes home!"

This last exclamation, extorted more by fear for herself than for the victim of her indiscretion, was cut short by the necessity of springing aside to avoid the trampling feet of the horsemen, who now set off in full gallop.

Gen. Lee wrapped himself closer in the cloak which had been thrown over him, and, dropping his head upon his breast, he groaned bitterly from behind his clenched teeth,

"Fool! fool! Why must my careless tongue always be my ruin?"

CHAPTER V.

LOVE VERSUS WEALTH.

THE short twilight was fading, — the twilight of a freezing day in December of '76, — and the streets of New York were filled with the multitudes who at that hour were seeking their homes for the evening meal. The possession of the city by the British troops had caused it to be a general rendezvous for those whose principles or whose interest induced them to continue their allegiance to the king, instead of joining their countrymen in the struggle for liberty then in progress, as well as for those who desired to shelter themselves and their families from the ravages of war in the open country.

Evelyn Chester stood near the window of her pleasant parlor, looking out on what was then the fashionable part of Broadway, and beside her stood Col. Stanley, in the rich dress of a British officer. They had been for some time conversing, and he had now risen to take his departure; but the conversation had evidently been of an unpleasant nature, for her cheek was crimson with the deep flush of embarrassment, and, though her eyes were downcast, her manner was reserved and

haughty. The face of her companion expressed anger and mortification.

“I shall not consider this decision final, Miss Evelyn,” he said, as she stood evidently waiting for him to leave. “To say nothing of my own feelings, to which you do such cruel injustice, I must still hope that the wishes of Lord Evansdale, and the elevated rank which will be yours if you accede to them, will induce you to reconsider the subject.”

“It is in vain, Mr. Stanley,” replied the lady, “and I do not wish this matter again urged. Lord Evansdale has never cared to acknowledge me until now, and I cannot have much affection for a grandfather whom I have never seen, and who was so harsh and stern to my poor mother. In a matter like this, which affects the happiness of my whole life, I shall not be guided by him.”

Col. Stanley bit his lips, and an angry glance shot from his eyes as he heard these words. Evelyn saw it, and, in a more gentle tone, she added,

“Forgive me for speaking so plainly, but I wished to spare you the pain of further conversation on this point. My decision is irrevocable.”

She curtseyed as if to bid him farewell. He saw that he could not with propriety remain longer, but, being determined his suit should not end thus, he concealed his chagrin as much as possible, and said, gayly, with a total change of manner,

“Permit me, then, to say adieu, and let me, as your grandfather’s *protégé*, be to you the friend I might have been if

these unfortunate hopes had not made me too bold. Thus I kiss this fair hand in token of peace."

As he spoke, he seized her hand, and, before she could prevent him, touched it to his lips; and with a low, courtly bow, he left her.

When he had gone she sank into a chair by the window, vexed and yet half amused at the coolness and pertinacity of her suitor. As she sat musing there, watching the passing throng, her thoughts turned away from the present, and the lover she could not accept, to a sunset in summer, when beneath the green trees surrounding her father's country-house she had listened to such words from another, — words the very memory of which thrilled her heart, and brought a glad light into the darkness of her lustrous eyes. Where was he now — that lover, in comparison with whose warm, generous impulses, and lofty principles, the selfish views and cold, cynical wisdom of the man who had just left her seemed doubly repulsive?

Alas! since that interview beneath his father's roof, she had neither seen or heard from him, nor could she soon expect to do so; and, bravely as she had then spoken of their prolonged separation, her spirit sank within her as she now thought of it, and imagined him with those who at this inclement season were retiring, broken and harassed by repeated disasters, before the army the mother-country had sent over to subdue their dauntless spirits. She was impatient of her own position of ease and luxury, while he was suffering fatigue, and cold, and hunger. The gayeties in

which she was forced to mingle seemed hollow mockeries of the anxiety and trouble he endured; and to that true heart it appeared an outrage to his love for her to be considered, as she knew she was, the affianced bride of Col. Stanley.

Since their arrival in New York, he had been so assiduous in his attentions as to keep all others aloof; and, as her father wished her to mingle in society, where her beauty and reputed wealth made her soon the "bright particular star" of the season, she could not well avoid the inference her acquaintances drew from his assiduities. This impression he had taken good care to verify on all suitable occasions, but never until now had he given her an opportunity formally to reject him. He did not dream of any prior affection, for he thought her life had been too secluded to admit such a possibility, but still was unwilling to risk a refusal, being uncertain how far her father would in that case extend his authority, and without it he had little hope of ultimate success.

In those times which "tried men's souls," there was enough of the strange and exciting in every-day life to interest the mind; and men, in this country at least, had not commenced the study of those puzzling questions which weary the brains of people in this later age. The only "magnetism" they knew was believed by the truly orthodox to be veritable witchcraft. The odylie fluid was not so much as dreamed of; and one who had talked to them of "attraction or repulsion of spheres" would have been looked upon as crazy, if not worse. But human nature was the same then as now, and men and women experienced the same likings and dislikings

for each other which have since received such scientific explanations; and had Evelyn Chester been "fancy free" when she met Col. Stanley, she would have felt a repugnance for him not to be overcome by his fine person, his pleasing address, or the varied stores of information he had gathered from travelling in foreign countries. His courtly manner seemed to her too cold, too polished; his wit too sarcastic and cruel, and launched too often, in unguarded moments, at those principles most dear and sacred to her; and, beneath all his endeavors to please, she recognized, instinctively, the entire selfishness of his nature.

Rising, at length, from her troubled revery, she crossed the room, and, opening a door communicating with her father's library, went in and stood behind his chair. Twilight had deepened into darkness, but the firelight revealed every nook of the cosy little place; — the tall case of books, the sweeping folds of the thick curtains before the windows, a picture or two on the walls, a few chairs around the table which occupied the centre of the room, covered with books and holding a portable desk heavily bound with brass, and Mr. Chester sitting thoughtfully in his high-backed leathern chair, his person enveloped in an ample robe of dark-green velvet lined with purple silk. So silently had she entered that her step had been unheard but her father knew the touch of her light fingers as they toyed with his hair, and, taking her hand, would have drawn her to her accustomed seat on his knee, but she resisted.

"Let me stay here, father," she said. "I have something to tell you."

"Ah, what is it?" he asked, his smile betraying a little anxiety.

"Col. Stanley was here this afternoon."

"Is that so unusual?" he said, as Evelyn paused.

"But he spoke of his wishes, of his hopes," she added, in an embarrassed whisper.

"And you — Evelyn, what did you say to his addresses?"

She changed her position suddenly, and, half kneeling at his feet, threw her arms around him, and looked eagerly in his face.

"Father," she exclaimed, "to marry that man would be to perjure myself in the sight of heaven! Will you compel me to do so?"

"God forbid!" he ejaculated, fervently.

Overcome by this unexpected relief, Evelyn burst into tears, and, lifting her from the floor, he pillowed her head upon his breast, and soothed her fondly. Between these two there had ever existed the most tender and confiding affection, and the most unreserved interchange of thought. Never had his daughter dreamed of disobeying his wishes, and the thought of opposing them in this instance had pained her deeply.

"Did you so very much wish it?" she asked, at length.

"There were reasons why it seemed best to me to favor his suit," replied her father, "and, perhaps, as the crisis has come, I had better speak of them more fully than I have

done. But first let me thank you, my child, for your submission to my will, even when I must have seemed cruel in what I required. I intended nothing which would eventually trouble you, but in order to effect my purposes I was obliged to seem harsh and unfeeling."

"O, no, father," she hastened to say, "I never thought so. I did not wonder much that you opposed me. With your views about the war, that was but natural. I never thought you unkind but once, and that was—" She hesitated, and he added, with a slight smile,

"That was when I offered Percy Grey a commission in the British army. He took it as an insult."

"It was. How could you do it, father?"

"I wanted to try the young man's mettle. I have had so little opportunity to know his real character, that I considered it excusable."

Something in Mr. Chester's tone made his daughter's heart throb with surprise and sudden hope, and a new light broke upon the conduct which had so long puzzled her. He noticed the tremor and the flash of mute inquiry in her eyes, and added, gravely,

"Listen to me, my child, and do not decide rashly. You know your mother fled from her father's house to join her fate with mine, and that she was never allowed to return there. My family was as ancient and honorable as hers, but its fortunes had decayed, and I had no wealth to offer the heiress of Evansdale. For this stolen match she was never forgiven, and, though she had only consented to it when they

would have forced her into the arms of another, her father's curse rang in her ears continually, and poisoned every after joy, — it weighed upon her spirits, and wore out her life. They said she died of consumption, soon after you were born ; perhaps she did, but she was sensitive and timid, and I solemnly believe it was that awful curse which killed her."

He paused, deeply affected, and the eyes of his earnest listener were cast down and filled with tears. When he spoke again, it was in a low, sad tone, as if painful memories were busy at his heart.

"After that there was a weary time. Sick at heart, and loathing life, I wandered hither and thither, leaving you in the care of the nurse who had followed us from England. When you were four years old I saw you for the first time after your mother died, and in a little while found myself abundantly repaid for assuming the duties of a parent ; for your childish affection soothed my profound melancholy, and, by filling my heart with new cares and joys, brought me back to the world. Since then, Evelyn, I have lived for you. Together we sought these western shores, and together we have lived in our country solitude, until the war compelled us to take refuge here.

"Lord Evansdale is now alone in the world. His only son died unmarried, and the old man has no heir. He has no liking for me, but you are his descendant, and he would rather the estate should go to you than to a distant branch of the family, whom he has never known. Perhaps, also, he repents his cruelty to your mother. He has written, as you

know, to inform me that he will make you his heiress if you will marry Col. Stanley, who was once his ward. Otherwise, the unentailed property will be given to the next of kin. Your grandfather is a stern and arbitrary man, and it is much for him to have made the first offer towards reconciliation, even though trammelled with this condition. If you refuse it, he will not probably notice you again. You shall be free to make what choice you will, but I must own that I have some ambition to see you occupy the place you would grace so well. I would restore the child to the rank the mother sacrificed when she came to be the sunshine of my life in a lower sphere. Here is the letter; I did not show it to you when it came."

As he spoke he opened his desk, and took from thence a paper, which she read, sitting on the footstool at his feet. After a short silence, she answered,

"Father, this inheritance belongs to me of right, as my mother's representative, and if my grandfather had any kindly feeling for me he would not offer it accompanied by such odious conditions. He only desires an heiress to his estates who is of his own blood. And shall I be doomed to wed a man I cannot love, in order to gratify this pride, which brings with it no gleam of affection? There is something in the tone of his letter and in its stipulations, that rouses all the pride of my nature, and makes it seem impossible for me to accept them. I feel chilled and terrified at the grand life he offers me, — a life unblest by love. I turn from the thought, and a picture of our past life rises before me. O, my father, let us

give up the vain dreams of ambition, and remain here, where we have been so happy ! ”

Her father made no immediate reply, and his thoughts seemed troubled as his eyes rested on the face upturned to his, eloquent with emotion. As he mused a servant entered with lights, and, clearing the table of its burden, placed thereon a tray containing a tea-urn, with a service of Dresden china, a plate with a few slices of toast, and another with delicate cakes manufactured by Evelyn's own hands. This was their customary evening meal when alone together, and a prettier picture of comfort could not well be imagined. Usually, at this hour, Evelyn amused him with the news and gossip of the day, or he told her of his reading, and taught her the facts he had thus gained. But now she presided at the table in a thoughtful silence, that was hardly broken until the cups were removed, and she had resumed her position at his feet. Then he said, abruptly,

“ My daughter, you referred to my opinions respecting the war. You have mistaken those opinions. You are mistaken if you think I have no sympathy with the colonies in this struggle against oppression. You look surprised,” he added, as he met her wondering gaze, “ and I have purposely left you to suppose me a Tory ; for, though I have secretly done much to aid the patriots, though my wishes and hopes are with them, my ill-health makes a quiet life necessary ; and that, together with my fear of injuring you with your grandfather by openly espousing their cause, has hitherto kept me a concealed friend.”

Evelyn sprang up joyfully, and threw her arms around his neck.

“O, is it so?” she said. “Let the inheritance go! Let us avow our feelings! Let us share the glorious conflict! Believe me, father, each man’s influence is much, where the odds are so fearfully against the right; and I cannot consent that our principles should be sacrificed to any hope of worldly gain. You have hesitated for my sake, but now you can no longer doubt.”

“You know all now,” he answered, “except that my property has already suffered much in the war, and if it continues we shall be reduced to comparative poverty. I have longed to place you in a position where these annoyances cannot reach you. Consider well before deciding; for you sacrifice great worldly advantages in refusing this union, and you are ill-fitted to endure want.”

“Do you think so? O, my father, you little know what I could bear, what I could do, if my soul was strengthened by a great motive. Often have I longed for such opportunities; often have I asked myself if this indolent life was all for which I was created; and now — O, you can hardly dream how happy you have made me!”

He smiled sadly at her enthusiasm.

“All this may be,” he said, “and yet you speak lightly of trials before which the strong and brave have fallen to rise no more. But we will talk no longer of this. If Col. Stanley persists in his suit, I will take measures to free you from his importunities. Your happiness and welfare are the sole

objects of my life, and no force shall be put upon your inclinations. That you might not be mistaken with regard to them, I have subjected you to this trial; and its result leaves me but one course to pursue. Evelyn, look here ! ”

He took a letter from a pocket in his robe, and laid it in her hand. She started, with a vivid flush, a quick glance of wondering delight, and clasped it to her bosom.

“ Where did you get it ? ” she asked, breathlessly.

“ If I should tell you, you might think me fit for ‘ treason, stratagems, and spoils.’ No, Evelyn, that is my secret ; but go you to your room and read your letter, and answer it if you will, for the messenger who brought it will call this evening to see me, and I can trust him with your reply.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRAP BAITED.

It would be doing Col. Stanley injustice to suppose he did not love Evelyn as well as a man of his cold and selfish nature could love another than himself; and, in addition, he felt a strong desire to replenish his exhausted purse, and to repurchase the estate he had lost at the gaming-table, by means of the broad lands of Evansdale. He knew their present proprietor would never alienate them from his own family, and it was only through this marriage he could hope to enjoy them.

Therefore, amid all the scenes of misery which the country presented during that memorable winter, it would have been difficult to find a more disappointed or miserable man than he who passed with such a careless smile from the presence of his mistress, on this eventful evening. He spent its remaining hours in company with his brother officers, vainly endeavoring to forget his chagrin in the mirth which accompanies cards and wine. But, when late at night he found himself again on the way to his lodgings, he was drawn by an irresistible impulse to the house where Evelyn lived. After pacing the

sidewalk before the door until the keen night-wind had somewhat cooled the fever of his brain, he was about to pursue his way homeward, when he was arrested by seeing a man's head appear cautiously above the close and high board-fence surrounding the garden attached to Mr. Chester's dwelling. The moon was shining dimly, but there was light enough to make visible a face not very prepossessing in appearance, and a shock of red hair, surmounted by a close Scotch cap.

After a moment given to reconnoitring, the owner of the face seemed to consider himself safe from observation, and, climbing the top of the fence, sprang lightly down, ran across the street, and disappeared at the next corner. Stanley was hidden from view by the shadow of the house, but he noticed the stranger wore a gray cloth dress, usual to the pedlers, who at that time, when intercourse, save of a warlike nature, was almost wholly suspended between the city and country, showed their Yankee shrewdness and 'turned an honest penny' by carrying their wares to and fro.

Wondering a little at the occurrence, he walked slowly along, and had nearly reached his quarters when the noise of a drunken brawl at a little distance attracted his attention. Angry at this breach of discipline, he turned quickly down the narrow and crooked lane from whence the sound proceeded, and in a few minutes came in sight of a low tavern, before the door of which three or four soldiers were fighting. As he drew near he saw in their midst, vainly endeavoring to ward off the blows aimed at him from every side, a man whom he instantly recognized, by the gray clothes and the red cap, to

be the pedler, whose mysterious exit from Mr. Chester's garden had so puzzled him. At the sound of Col. Stanley's voice the soldiers fled, but not before one of them had with a billet of wood given the pedler a blow on the head that stretched him senseless on the ground.

Calling for aid from the tavern, Col. Stanley had the man carried within doors, where it was found that his head was much injured by the blow, and he had also received a wound in the side, which was bleeding profusely. Bidding the landlord send for a doctor, and leaving money to provide for the wounded man's necessities, he left him, and once more pursued his way homeward.

The next morning, as he was passing along the street by the tavern, too much absorbed in his own plans to remember at that moment the events of the preceding evening, he was stopped by the small, square figure of Billy Flannigan, the host, who, hat in hand, had placed himself directly in his path, and, with an obeisance he meant to be very respectful, claimed his attention.

"Och, sure, yer honor, and is n't it me that 's been watchin' for yees? The man 's very bad, and kind o' delarious like; an' I 'm thinkin' he 's dyin' sure!"

"Ah!" said Stanley, carelessly. "You sent for a doctor, did n't you?"

"Well, yer honor," replied the man, scratching his head, "it 's one thing to sind for a doctor, and it 's another thing to git 'un; an' the likes o' us poor folks oftener gits the one nor the other."

“Do you mean to say the doctor would n't come?”

“Faix! an' it's jist that, yer honor!” replied Billy. “I goes to Dr. Robinson — him as lives fornent the hospital — an' I knocks an' knocks. Faix! but he's the sound slaper, says I, for I could n't wake him at all, by reason that he was n't there at all, at all; an' a woman puts her head at last out the windy in the next house, and tells me he's moved into the barracks. An' so I goes roun' an' roun', an' if yer honor 'll b'lave it, it was mornin' afore I gits home, and then the man was dyin', sure!”

“You don't pretend you was out all night hunting for a doctor, do you?” asked Stanley.

“Yis, yer honor, it's that I'm tellin' ye. Maybe the dhrap crathur I took jist to warm me got into me head — I don' know — I don't jist remember about the whole night rightly, but 't was mornin' afore I gits home, and thin sure the man was dyin', and nobody to help him.”

“You was drunk, you rascal, and I suppose you've let him bleed to death!” said Stanley, indignantly.

“Faix! an' that was what th' ould woman said!” replied he; “an' she jist sint me out for yer honor, an' if ye'd only step in a minute, and see that it's reg'lar like, an' no foul play done — an' maybe yer honor would give a nate bit of a wake for him!”

By this time they had reached the tavern, and Stanley followed his conductor to the bedside of the sufferer. His reason had returned a little, but the death-rattle in his throat,

and the livid paleness of his face, showed that life was fast departing.

“Why have n’t you taken off his coat?” was Stanley’s first question, when he saw the man lying completely dressed as when they laid him on the bed.

“Faix! an’ did n’t we thry to, an’ did n’t he hould on so we could n’t?” replied Billy. “An’ I’m thinkin’ there’s *gould* somewhere about that coat, by the grip he made at it when we thryed to take it off.”

“Remove it now,” said Stanley; “it will ease his breathing, and he won’t know about it. Cut it, and take it off!”

But the dying man heard him, and when they attempted to obey the command made a feeble resistance, drawing the coat about him, as if to keep it near was the sole anxiety of those last moments of life. Soon his fingers wandered along the buttons until they rested on a particular spot, when he smiled vacantly, and lay quite still, as if satisfied. It was the last effort of the mind, and in a few moments he had ceased to breathe.

Stanley’s eyes had followed this last motion, and his curiosity was excited to know the cause. Placing his hand on the same spot, he felt a small, hard substance, and on ripping open the place with his knife found a flat tin box, a few inches long, sewed in the lining beneath the button. Upon being opened, this proved to be full of papers compactly folded together. As there was no money anywhere to be found, Stanley was convinced that the man’s solicitude for these papers indicated their importance, and, leaving means

to have the body decently interred, he took them with him to his lodgings.

The first paper he opened contained only some lines drawn in red and black ink, which seemed totally void of meaning. The second was a small piece a few inches square, on which were traced some characters in cipher. He did not stop to study them, for beneath it he saw a letter, the address of which, written in a feminine hand, arrested his attention. He opened it, and the firm yet delicate inscriptions so characteristic of the writer hardly needed her signature to convince him that he knew her.

He started and grew pale, while the letter dropped from his hands. He did not soliloquize, — people in real life seldom do, — but many thoughts went rushing through his brain. *Dare he go on?* Dare he invade the sanctuary of her familiar correspondence? Dare he possess himself of the power which might tempt him too fatally to compel her to his will? And again, what right had she to have communication with the rebel army? He appreciated too well her frank and noble nature, to believe she would do so clandestinely; and, if her father knew it, and consented, what then was *he*? What was the meaning of these mysterious papers, and did Mr. Chester write them? To whom were they addressed, and what instructions did they convey?

O, Evelyn! when with love-lit eyes, and fingers tremulous with the heart's quick throbbings, you traced your name there, how little did you think to what a fearful mystery it

would prove the key, beneath the gaze of those bold eyes, and the workings of that busy brain!

His indecision did not last long. He arose and locked the door to secure himself from interruption, and then, picking up the letter, seated himself to read it. As he read, a hard and bitter smile curled his lips. He understood all now! Percy Grey was his rival, and in her joy Evelyn had spoken unreservedly of her father's consent to their union, and sympathy with his struggles for the freedom of their country. Since the day they had met so accidentally, Stanley had not given a thought to this "major in homespun." Had any one suggested that he was in any way connected with Mr. Chester's silence, and his daughter's agitation, as they left the house, his aristocratic pride would have pronounced it simply impossible that a lady whom he meant to honor with his name could stoop so low. Now his eyes flashed, and a wild design formed itself in his mind to crush this rival, who had presumed to interfere with his purposes. Again and again he read the letter, and all his love for Evelyn, all his pique at her rejection of that love, became merged in a fixed determination to obtain her hand, by any means, at any price.

The sun mounted high in the heavens, and the tide of busy life poured through the streets and murmured in his ears. He heeded not. His servant brought in his dinner, but he swallowed it almost unconsciously, and returned again to the study that absorbed him. He was finding out the cipher. To him it was no fruitless task. "Any puzzle which human ingenuity has constructed, human ingenuity can solve;" and,

from some peculiar bias of his mind, studies of this kind had been a favorite amusement of his boyhood. Slowly, but surely, it unfolded before him, and then he understood that the unmeaning lines which first had met his eye formed a map of the surrounding country, and marked the course of armies. The sun was sinking in the west when he had finished his labor. His face was haggard, and his whole frame weary with the intensity of thought and passion. But he had triumphed, and the secret was his own. He held in his power Evelyn's happiness and her father's life.

At the same hour, the maiden on whom Stanley's thoughts were fixed with such baneful designs was sitting with her father in the library. With quick impulses and keen sensibilities, Evelyn Chester was yet possessed of a firm mind and a strong heart. Her cheek might flush and pale, or her eye dim and brighten, with every passing emotion, but the high soul within would not be moved from its right purposes. In obedience to the command she considered it the first duty of her life to obey, she had resolutely striven to conquer the love which had gained such power over her, and with generous self-sacrifice had hidden from her father the pain the struggle cost her. But, as a bird, when some kind hand opens the door of its cage, escapes, carolling, into the free air, its wings glittering in the sunshine, so, at Mr. Chester's words on the preceding evening, had that long-silenced affection risen exultingly from its prison in her heart, and, with a power before undreamed of, claimed the homage of her whole being. How gay were her thick-coming fancies, how bright her hopes, as

she sat by the window, with the golden western light falling over her like a glory! She held a book in one hand, while the other supported her queenly head, with its wealth of hair parted simply above her beautiful brow, and rippling back to the classic braids that bound it, in glossy waves of purplish black. Her eyes were half hidden by their long lashes, and a faint smile curved the exquisite outline of her rosy lips.

A noise from the street interrupted the quiet of her thought, and, looking up, she met her father's eyes fixed on her with fond pride. He was almost as glad as his daughter that his self-imposed barrier to her happiness was removed.

"I hear a noise," she said, "music and shouting. What is it?"

"I heard, to-day," replied Mr. Chester, "that Gen. Lee and his staff were surprised and taken prisoners in a country-house somewhere in Jersey, and, probably, they have just been brought into town. They seem to be coming this way."

"Where can they be placed?" said Evelyn. "I hear the prisons are full, and most of them so crowded that the prisoners have not room to turn over on the floor where they lie at night."

"It is dreadful to think how they must suffer!" answered Mr. Chester, with a sigh. "Many of them die of fever, and some in a more terrible way — alone, and in darkness, by the hangman's hands. But I will not pain you by speaking of this," he added, as Evelyn uttered an exclamation of horror.

He came to the window, and they watched the advancing crowd. A band of musicians preceded a company of soldiers,

who marched in a hollow square, surrounding a small party of prisoners. Gen. Lee walked a little in advance of his officers, his face buried in his cloak, as if to hide his mortification; but one, who followed near, seemed to have lost all consciousness of his painful position, and gazed eagerly around, as if seeking some one in the street as they passed along. As he went by the window where Evelyn and her father stood, a glad smile and a look of recognition passed over his face, and he half stopped and raised his hand, as if to bow to them.

“Evelyn, child,” said Mr. Chester, quickly, “look! Who is that?”

“It is Percy Grey!”

The sudden shock was too much for her at that moment when her hopes were brightest, and, with a low, gasping moan, she sank unconscious at her father’s feet.

But Percy went on with the air of a conqueror. What were defeat and imprisonment to him? He had seen her; and, though he could not have defined the reason of the change, a weight was lifted from his heart, and all the future grew bright. He hardly heard the shouts of the rabble, or thought of what awaited him, until a command was given to halt, and, as the ranks opened, the prisoners were marched into the open space enclosed in front of the City Hall, since called the Park.

The old City Hall was a large, square, brick building, erected by the worthy burghers of Manhattan for more peaceful purposes, but now converted into a prison; and, with its

heavily-grated windows and double guard of soldiers, it seemed to frown gloomily, in the waning light, upon the hapless men whom adverse fate now led within its shadow. Inside the hall every precaution had been taken for the safety of the prisoners. A grated iron barricade, with a door heavily barred and chained, had been placed across the hall at the foot of the staircase, on each side of which, and in the hall above, walked two Hessian soldiers; and on the right hand of the entrance was the office of Cunningham, the cruel deputy of Gen. Howe.

Into this room the prisoners were led, where, after a rigid personal examination, a record was made of the dress, age, and appearance, of Gen. Lee; and then the guard conducted him up stairs into a closet adjoining the rooms where the most noted prisoners taken by the British were kept; and, it having been determined to treat him as a deserter from that army, rather than as a prisoner of war, he was confined in irons.

After some further consultation, accompanied by taunts and insults that made the blood boil in their veins, the other officers were ordered to the Sugar-House. This was a small, circular, stone building, in Liberty-street, five stories high; each story being divided into two apartments, and most of them crowded with human beings in every stage of destitution and misery. As Percy Grey and his companions entered within the high wall surrounding this gloomy prison, their hearts sunk. From the narrow windows above them wasted and pallid faces were looking out, and the rude manner and rough voice of the jailer who received them from the soldiers

did not tend to raise their expectations of the treatment they might receive at his hands.

Calling his assistants, the jailer marched them up one flight of the narrow stairs, and, opening a door, ushered them into a low, dark room, where a few forlorn objects, cowering in the straw, shrank away as they entered. Counting them one by one as they went in, and giving the last a kick that threw him prostrate on the floor, their brutal conductor locked them in, saying, with an oath, to the young man beside him, "There, now, let 'em git out o' that cage, if they can, before the hangman comes to wring their necks!"

His companion did not reply, and something like an execration escaped through his clenched teeth as he slowly descended the stairs behind him. When they reached the outer door, the jailer added,

"Now, off with you, Jem, and be sure you're back in season, for it takes younger blood than mine to keep warm long in this infernal hole."

"What do you think o' them poor critturs up there, then?" said Jem, jerking his head towards the stairs.

"Them! blast 'em, who cares if they are cold? Freezin' 's good for the Yankees!" answered he, with another oath; and thus dismissed Jem hastened away.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRISONER.

IN a low, one-story house in Nassau-street, Jem's mother, Mrs., or, as she was generally called, "widow" Henderson, was engaged, as the darkness of a winter evening came on, in bringing inside her shop the various articles that during the day had been displayed about the door as signs of the abundance and variety of the goods to be found within. The death of her husband, some years previous, having left her destitute, she had found occupation as housekeeper in Mr. Chester's family, while her son made himself useful in various ways about the house and farm. There they had since resided, until the rumors of Indian invasion had alarmed her patron, and, together with other motives, induced him to remove to New York. Thither she followed him with her son; and, as some loss of property had induced Mr. Chester to dismiss a part of his servants, she concluded to use the capital accumulated from her wages, year by year, to stock a small grocery-shop, which she opened in the front room of a house belonging to her former employer. She was a woman of shrewd business capacities, and her little shop soon became profitable; and,

having obtained a situation for her son as under-keeper in the Sugar-House jail, she forced him to accept it, though the good-natured boy shrank from a work so revolting to his feelings.

Having carefully closed and secured the shutters, and arranged everything in readiness for to-morrow's business, Mrs. Henderson counted the gains of the day now past, and retired with them into an interior apartment. This room, though compelled to serve for kitchen, parlor, and bed-room, was kept in nice order. A bright fire showed the well-sanded floor, and was reflected back from the pewter cups and plates which, scoured bright as silver, stood on the open dresser. Going to the fireplace, the widow withdrew one of the tiles from a corner near the wall, revealing in the chimney a small cavity already well filled with money.

She dropped the pieces she held slowly into the hole, and smiled as if the jingle of silver was a pleasant music to her ears.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody any luck," she said to herself; "an' if the blessed war will only last a while longer, Jem an' I will see old England yet with a pretty penny in our pockets."

She replaced the stone, and, after stirring the fire, drew out a small square table, and busied herself in arranging it for supper. Then taking from the crane the kettle, under the cover and through the nose of which the water was leaping and sputtering convulsively in its efforts to escape the torment of its fiery prison, she proceeded to make a "drawing of tea,"

carefully measuring the precious article in a small silver spoon kept for the purpose, and almost counting the leaves as she poured them into a black teapot.

As she was thus occupied, the door opened and her son entered.

“Glad to see you, Jem,” said his mother. “You’re all in the nick o’ time. The kettle’s biled, and while you’re gettin’ warm, and the tea’s drawin’, I’ll fry the eggs in a jiffy.”

Jem did not reply to this cordial salutation, but, throwing himself into an arm-chair standing in the chimney corner, he pulled his hat over his brows, and sat looking moodily into the fire. His mother cast many an anxious glance at him as she bustled about the room, but did not attempt to disturb him until, having finished her preparations, she took a seat at the table, saying, cheerfully,

“Come on, Jem! Ye an’t asleep, are ye? Come! the eggs is done to a turn, and the tea’s drawn!”

“I don’t want no tea! I’m mad!” said Jem, sulkily, giving his head a toss that threw his hat on the floor behind him. “T an’t no use talkin’, marm, I won’t have nothin’ more to do with that yer jail!”

“Why, Jem! — what ails ye, boy? Got promoted into the sarvice o’ your lawful king, and you frettin’! Don’t tell me!”

“Sarvice o’ the king!” replied Jem, scornfully, unawed by his mother’s well-feigned astonishment. “You know well enough, marm, I hate it like pison!”

“ Well, 't is bad, I know,” she answered, soothingly ; “ but you gets good wages, and if 't wan't you 't would be somebody else as would have to lock 'em up ; so they would n't be no better off, and you would n't be so well. So you might as well eat your supper.”

She enforced her philosophical reflection by pushing towards him a plate heaped with eggs and meat ; but he went on, without regarding her.

“ I don't see what the Yankees let themselvés be took for ! I would n't — I 'd fight to the last ! And, if they are took, why can't they be carried somewhere else ? I say it's a burnin' shame, and if the king knows how they 're treated, he 's ——”

“ Why, Jem ! — your lawful king ! ” interrupted widow Henderson, holding up both hands, in dismay.

“ Well, marm, I won't say nothin' about that, but it's too bad ! They 're packed like sheep in the Provost and the City Hall, and the hospitals is full, and the Sugar-House ; and down to the Wallabout they 're dyin' by hundreds. And now here 's another lot ! I 'll desert ! ”

“ Why, Jem ! — what 's come over ye ? ” said his mother. “ You an't no business scoldin' over that ! Don't you know that jest so many as is took prisoners, jest so many less is left to fight ? ”

“ You think so, do ye ? ” he replied, sneeringly. “ See if you 'll be glad when I tell ye who 's been and got took now ! Major Grey — that same one Miss Evelyn liked so well, and took on so about —— ”

“Miss Evelyn did n’t take on about him! She an’t the gal to take on after any young man, much less one o’ the rebels that’s a fightin’ agin his lawful king!” interrupted Mrs. Henderson, her womanly pride taking alarm for her young lady.

“O,” said Jem, striking his hand on the table with a force that made the dishes rattle, “I tell you she did like him, though! I was out in the garden that day ’fore he went off, and I heard ’em talkin’ behind the shrubbery, — and I won’t tell what I heard, nuther,” he added, breaking off suddenly.

“Well, no matter what you heard, if Miss Evelyn said it. Risk her! — she won’t come down to no young feller! But do eat your supper, Jem! The eggs is gettin’ cold, and cold eggs is horrid, any way, more ’specially fried. Fall to, and we can talk it over arterwards.”

Thus urged, and having somewhat relieved his feelings by expressing them, Jem “fell to” with such zeal that the eatables soon disappeared.

“There, now,” he said, at length, as he drew his hand across his mouth by way of napkin, and leaned back in his chair, “now I’ve eaten to please you, marm, and you may hear what I’ve got to say; for I know, bad as you hate the rebels, you’d hate worse to have our Miss Evelyn’s little finger ache, let alone her having her heart all smashed into flinders, as ’t will be if anything happens to that young man.”

“Well, talk away,” said his mother. “If you’ve got anything to say, say it. He *was* a purty young man, and pleasant-

spoken too, if he was fightin' agin his lawful king. Did he know you?"

"No," replied Jem. "'T was a'most dark, and I s'pose he did n't think o' me bein' in that dirty business, nuther. But I know'd him, the minute I sot eyes on him."

"Poor soul! 't is hard, but I don't see what we can do about it," said the widow, thoughtfully. "You gets good wages there ——"

"Well, now, for my part I an't so clear about that. Maybe we might get him out o' that cussed hole ——"

"We!—how?" interrupted his mother. "Now, Jem, don't you go and get into serapes! It won't do no good, not a bit; and you 're all I've got in this hull world, and if anything happens to you ——"

"Don't be an old fool, marm!" said her son, as she paused, and began wiping her eyes. It was rather a rough expression, but it was intended as a term of endearment, and she so understood it. Jem never called her an "old fool" when he seriously meant to act contrary to her wishes; and she grew composed, and put down her apron.

"Promise me, now, you won't do nothin'," she cried. "I never will consent to it — never!"

"Well, well, don't cry! Who 'd a thought you 'd been so easy frightened?" answered he, perceiving this was no time to reveal his half-formed plans. "I won't run my head into a noose without tellin' you first; so wipe your old eyes, an' go draw me a mug o' cider, for it's time I was off. It'll be cold as Jericho walking them stone floors to-night."

Whatever might have been Jem's ideas of the climate of Jericho, his mother appeared to consider it frigid enough to justify a little of "somethin' warmin'," in the cider, as well as numberless wrappers and overcoats. These she adjusted about him with great care; for this six-foot specimen of humanity had never to her eyes outgrown the care or control he needed when a baby.

Having arrived at the prison, Jem reported himself to the jailer, and, receiving from him the keys, proceeded to distribute food to the prisoners. Poor food it was, and the allowance to each man so small that they suffered constantly from hunger; and when he saw the crowd of eager faces that greeted him as each door was opened, his compassionate heart smote him as he thought of the plentiful supper he had himself enjoyed. He had often found means of performing little kindnesses for the unhappy beings under his charge, but all he could do unobserved was as nothing compared to the accumulation of suffering which he had no power to prevent.

When he entered the room where Percy Grey and his companions were confined, a scene of misery met his eyes. Some of them were wounded, and all were exhausted by the fatigue of their march and long exposure. The cold, dark cell, where they were crowded, had utterly subdued the excitement that hitherto sustained them, and despair had taken its place. They had sunk into various attitudes of weariness and dejection upon the straw with which the floor was covered, for the tender mercies of the British allowed them neither chairs or bedstead.

Percy, who was engaged in binding up the wounded arm of one of his comrades, started when he heard the voice that called upon some of the stronger and more selfish among those who had long been confined there, to relinquish to the new comers a portion of the food they were eagerly devouring. After a moment of confused recollection, he recalled to mind the merry tones he had so often heard in the fields of Chester Close; and Jem, seeing the earnest gaze fixed upon him, took advantage of a moment when his assistant was engaged in distributing food, and went to the spot where Percy stood, raising his finger to his lips in token of silence.

“Is it you, Jem?” said Percy, in a low tone. “How can you be in this place?”

“Yes, it’s me — more’s the pity!” was the whispered reply. “But don’t say nothing afore folks. Write what you want to know.” And, favored by the obscurity of the cell, he thrust paper and pencil into Percy’s hand.

“But, Miss Evelyn — how is she?” persisted he.

“Hush!” said Jem; “all right there, I reckon. Write to her, if you want to, and give me the note to-morrow.”

So saying, he turned away abruptly, and Percy, taking the hint, did not follow him with any more questions. A moment after, a rough voice exclaimed, “Here, you Yankee rebels, come and eat while you can, for this is all any of you’ll get till to-morrow night!”

And this was literally true, for during all the time they were inmates of that horrible prison, their food, coarse and unpalatable as it was, was served to them but once in twenty-

four hours. The head jailer, who kept the keys, delivered them to his young associates each evening for an hour, when they were expected to feed the prisoners, and to see that none had escaped or died; and then, having given the keys into his hands, they took turns in standing as sentinels in the passages of the prison. But in no case, even of sickness or death, would he allow the doors to be opened at any other time.

These cruelties, which were afterwards disowned and severely commented on by Gen. Howe, were inflicted by the callous and profligate men to whom the care of these wretched captives had been committed by the deputy Cunningham. Yet the fact that such needless sufferings were not intended by the mother-country did not prevent the bitter and vindictive feelings that for a long time rankled deeply, and were easily aroused to activity at the mention of the Sugar-House and the Wallabout.

The short meal ended, the attendants withdrew, leaving Percy and his companions in darkness, save for the moonlight streaming in through windows cut in the thick wall. But, alas! those unglazed windows admitted also the keen night-wind, which chilled them to the heart. The straw on the floor was filthy in the extreme, and filled with vermin; but before morning the cold was so intense they were glad to bury themselves in it, and lie close together, that the concentration of animal heat might keep them from freezing.

Many of these were men fondly cared for, and some of them young and delicately nurtured all their lives, till now.

For their sakes what true hearts were even then breaking with the wearing sickness of hope deferred ; what gentle eyes were dim with tears of vain weeping ; what soul-wrung prayers were ascending to heaven !

O ! at this distance of time, at this height of prosperity, how impossible it is for us to fathom the deep seas of suffering in which the foundations of our liberty were laid !

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUCCESSFUL PLOT.

A WEEK had passed since the occurrence of the scenes described in the last chapter. To Percy Grey and his companions it had been a week of privation and misery, alleviated, indeed, to the former by the hopes he entertained of ultimate escape, and of seeing again, if only for a moment, the bright object of so many dreams and imaginings. To Evelyn and her father it had been a time of anxious consultation with Jem Henderson, whose budding purpose to effect the escape of his prisoner ripened into full decision when he saw the pale face of his young mistress. For her he cherished a chivalrous devotion, that would have led him to brave even greater danger than attended this enterprise.

Secure of Jem's faithfulness, Evelyn had sent many messages to her lover; and Mr. Chester, whose doting affection for his child made it impossible for him to resist her entreaties, now that he had opened his heart to her, had been eager to furnish means for Percy's liberation.

Saturday night closed in, dark and stormy. The wind howled, and the snow fell fast. Few who could remain in

doors were exposed to the inclement weather; and as Mr. Chester faced the blast, on his way to the widow Henderson's, he drew his fur-lined cloak about him, and shuddered as he thought of those who, without fire or sufficient clothing, were feeling that keen, snow-laden wind sweep through the open windows of their prison.

He found a bright fire in the widow's dwelling, and Mrs. Henderson herself at that hour engaged in washing up "the tea-things." But she did not give him her usual noisy welcome. She could hardly forgive him for the plan, which she believed would only bring trouble to herself, and danger to her son. Moreover, in her intense loyalty, she had some scruples of conscience about the propriety of a scheme "to help them away as would go right off and fight agin their lawful king." It required all her gratitude and affection for Mr. Chester and Evelyn to overcome these feelings; but, after many arguments and entreaties, she had reluctantly promised to aid him, since her aid was necessary. They understood how disagreeable the matter was to her, and, without noticing her taciturnity, Mr. Chester now turned to Jem, who, comfortably seated before the burning embers, was engaged in a scientific department of the culinary art, which he called "toasting his shins."

"Well, Jem," said he, seating himself beside him, "this will be a bitter cold night for our friends in the jail. I hope one of them, at least, won't have to endure many more such."

"I hope not, nuther!" said Jem, "and I was jest a tellin'

marm I think we might as well try Monday night as any — that is, if you can get the pass you spoke about.”

“I think there will be no difficulty in doing so,” replied Mr. Chester. “I have sent a servant into the country once already since we left the Close, and it can’t excite suspicion if I request a similar passport for Major Grey. I will hire a boatman to take him across to the Jersey shore, and when once he has passed the line of guards he will be safe, and can go where he pleases. This will be my care. Is your part arranged? Could you get the false key made?”

“Easy as could be, and no questions asked,” said Jem, laughing. “I blacked my face, and put on a wig, and talked nigger; and I reckon the scamp that made it is used to that sort o’ business, for he didn’t ask no questions when I showed him the gold piece.”

“That is all safe, then,” said Mr. Chester. “Now, when will you use it?”

“O, deary me! an’ to think how I’ve been thanking my stars, through this whole blessed war, that Jem was n’t a rebel!” soliloquized Mrs. Henderson, with a groan. “And him getting such good wages, too!”

“Monday night there won’t be any moon, and that’ll be the best time,” said Jem, without heeding her. “If this storm clears off so as to give Mr. Grey a chance to get away the next day, we’ll try it then. I’ve been dreadful in hopes the river would freeze over solid enough for him to cross on the ice, and not have to trust no boatman—besides bein’ dangerous as ’tis now, all full o’ floatin’ ice.”

“Why could n’t he wait a while, then? The ice must soon become firm,” said Mr. Chester.

“Because it ’s a choice between hangin’ and drownin’ with him, and I reckon he ’d like drownin’ best o’ the two. When the jails get too full, and they don’t die off fast enough, they take out a few, now and then, and hang ’em out behind the Provost there, in dark nights. They don’t make much noise about it, but they do it, and Mr. Grey ’s as likely to be took out as anybody.”

Jem shuddered as he said this, and for a little while neither of his hearers felt like answering his remark.

“You think, then, it will be safest for him to leave our house immediately after his release?” said Mr. Chester, at length.

“Yes, indeed, I do,” replied Jem, emphatically. “They ’ll be sure not to find out he ’s gone till feeding-time comes next evening, for that ’s the only time the cells are opened. Then it ’ll be too dark to do much in the way o’ looking for him, even if they feel like taking the trouble; so he ’ll be sure of twenty-four hours, and that ought to put him out o’ harm’s way. I’ve fixed it up fust rate,” continued he, laughing. “All this week, when I ’ve been out among folks in the street, I’ve had a most awful toothache, and had my face all wrapped up, and worn my old cloak all wrapped round me. Now, you see, if Mr. Grey happens to have to speak to any of the guard, and his voice don’t sound jest like mine, they ’ll think it ’s the toothache, and his face ’ll be all wrapped up, so they won’t see so quick ’t an’t me; and the cloak ’ll help hide

the difference too. I've smuggled in a suit of my clothes for him to put on over his 'n, for I'm stouter 'n he is, — he's growin' dreadful thin, Mr. Chester, — and he's jest about as tall as I be. I don't want him to leave his own clothes, 'cause you know somebody might ask who he changed with."

"Well done, Jem!" said his guest, smiling. "You have really quite a talent for this business."

"Let Jem alone for that!" interrupted Mrs. Henderson, gratified by this compliment to her son's ingenuity. "He's the *beatermost* hand to make plans and think of everything aforehand — only I hopes no harm won't come of it!" she added, sighing.

"O, never you fear, marm! I don't believe my neck 'll stretch for this, anyhow. I've got it all fixed with Mr. Grey. It's my watch the first half o' the night, an' when Bill Grimes comes in and takes my place, I goes out with the guard, and the gates is shut agin till morning. Well, I'm goin' to have him take my place in the entry, all fixed out in my clothes, you know, and when the guard changes he goes out with them, same as I allers do. And marm, here, is to be on hand to show him the way to your house."

"What will you do, meantime?"

"O, I've found a place under the stairs, among some barrels stowed away up in the third story. I can hide there, and some time the next day, when there an't too many round, I come out and lounge down stairs, same as if I'd been up on an arrand. Nobody'll mind me; I'm allers about there."

“Then you will bring Major Grey to my house?” said Mr. Chester, turning to the widow, who, having completed her household arrangements, had seated herself with her knitting.

“Why, yes,” she replied, gloomily. “Jem’s got me into the scrape, and I suppose I must do my share. An’ the sooner the better, I say, for I’m wearin’ away to a thread-paper worryin’ over it. I hope we shan’t all smart for it; but, if anything happens to Jem, I’ll never forgive you to my dyin’ day, sir — that I won’t!”

“We must trust to Providence for safety,” said he.

“Providence! I calls it a clear runnin’ in the face and eyes of Providence! Gettin’ us into sich a scrape, and we all settled so comfortable, and the blessed war a bein’ sich a good thing for us!” interrupted Mrs. Henderson, indignantly.

“But I don’t see as anything can be proved against your son, even should suspicion fall on him after the escape is discovered. And if so, I have sufficient interest to protect him. So don’t be afraid.”

“To be sure, Mr. Grey *was* a purty young man,” said the widow, thoughtfully, “and well-behaved when he was to our house to the Close; and he gave me the beautifullest bright-figured calimanco when he went away — an’ if Miss Evelyn likes him — well, Mr. Chester, I’ll do my best, and I hopes Providence *will* take care of us, as you say, though he *is* fightin’ agin his lawful king.”

“You must n’t let your loyalty overcome your humanity,” said Mr. Chester. “Don’t you remember the Scripture bids

us 'open the prison doors, and let the oppressed go free'? So you see it is all right."

"Well, now, I never looked at it in jest that light afore," replied the widow. "But who'd a thought o' hearing *you* a quotin' Scriptor agin your lawful king?"

"Not quoting it against his majesty, but in favor of Major Grey's escape," said Mr. Chester, smiling.

"Any way, now we're in for it, I'm kind of glad there is Scriptor for it," replied Mrs. Henderson. "I s'pose we must keep on, for I do believe my Jem would fret his life out if he should think he had n't done all he could to please Miss Evelyn. He thinks a dreadful sight of her, and always has, ever since she took sich care of him and me when we had the fever, and nobody else would come near us."

Jem blushed up to the roots of his yellow hair as his mother uttered these last words, and, rising hastily, signified his intention of going out to his watch in the jail. Mr. Chester also took leave, after arranging with the widow to inform him if anything occurred to prevent the accomplishment of their designs.

Monday morning dawned gloriously; for the storm had ended in a warm rain, which obliterated every trace of winter, and left the air just cool enough to be invigorating. No weather could be more favorable to his purposes for the ensuing night, and Mr. Chester went early to the City Hall to obtain from Cunningham a passport by favor of which Percy Grey might escape through the British lines.

When he reached the Park, he found Sergeant O'Keefe

and several of the English officers, among whom was Stanley, gathered in a group about the door, and chatting gayly together as they looked on while Cunningham was drilling the American prisoners under his charge, for the double purpose of giving them exercise and affording amusement to his companions. Almost all those who endured this indignity were men who had held offices of rank and distinction in the service of their country; and the feelings with which they endured these and similar insults which were often heaped upon them may be better imagined than described. Upon Mr. Chester's approach, Cunningham turned to him, and, after the usual salutation, said, pointing with his sword to the group of prisoners,

“ You see I 'm giving my illustrious friends an opportunity to display their skill in military evolutions.”

Mr. Chester bowed gravely, but, making no reply to this sneer, signified his desire to transact the business which brought him thither. Cunningham, who knew his connection with Lord Evansdale, and therefore esteemed him a person of importance, immediately ushered him into his office, and prepared to write the passport he requested. In doing this it became necessary to mention the personal appearance of the servant who was to carry it, and Stanley, who had lingered near the door, heard the description thus given.

It was satisfactory in one respect, for it was such that Mr. Chester could not himself use it with any safety, if he wished to leave the city; but Stanley was seized with a violent desire to know if the proposed messenger portended any further com-

munication with the rebel camp. Thinking of this, he walked slowly away from the spot, and, turning into Nassau-street, was proceeding to his lodgings, when, at the corner of Liberty-street, his progress was hindered by a crowd which had collected on the sidewalk before the door of a large building that stood there. This had been the "Middle Dutch Church," but when the city passed into the enemy's hands it was converted into a hospital. Of late, however, it had been appropriated to another use, less in keeping with its sacred character. The windows had been taken out, and the space within the walls strewed thickly with tan. A pole had been placed across the centre for the convenience of equestrian exercise, and now a party of dragoons were in full practice, leaping and riding around the area. The crowd were occupied in watching these movements, and, though a few looked on with frowning brows, and angry words uttered in an under tone, the majority seemed to enjoy the sport, regardless of the wanton desecration.

Stanley stopped a moment to watch the proceedings.

"Hi!" said a voice at his side, as a tall dragoon cleared the pole with a leap that carried him several feet higher than the others, "Hi! dat yer feller wid the long tail, he smart one for jump!"

Stanley recognized the voice as that of a negro boy whom he had often met at Mr. Chester's. A sudden thought occurred to him, and, beckoning the boy away from the group, he continued his walk. Juniper followed, a little surprised, and curious to know for what he was wanted.

“ Good-morning, Juniper ! ” said Stanley, turning to him, with unwonted suavity, as they entered a quiet street.

“ Mornin’, massa ! ” replied he, with a grin.

“ How are the folks at your house, this morning? Is Miss Evelyn well ? ” proceeded his questioner.

“ Thankee, massa,” replied the negro, consequentially. “ Sally and me, we ’s peart, and ole massa ’s so ’s to be totin’; but Miss Evelyn an’t so bery well dis week past. ’Pears like she hab de doldrums.”

“ The what ? ” asked Stanley.

“ ’Pears like she ’d been cryin’ ebery mornin’. Don’o what for, I sure, massa.”

This unexpected reply threw Stanley into so serious a revery that for some time he was silent; and Juniper, supposing the conversation ended, was beginning to lag behind, with a view of returning to the riding-school, when Stanley, stopping in his walk, said to him, suddenly,

“ How many servants does your master keep ? ”

“ Why, massa,” said Juniper, in an apologetic tone, “ yer see, what wid sellin’ the farm-stuff for nuffin, and movin’ up here, and all, ole massa done got rid o’ some o’ de property, I s’pect, and so we don’t live like we did at all, we don’t. Dere used to be a power o’ servants, and now dere an’t but me, and Sally, — she my sister, ye know, massa, — and Sam, de coachee — dat all. Mighty poor show dat ! ”

“ And does any one ever come to your house, — any servant or countryman, I mean, — a tall man, with brown hair and

light complexion? Think, now! I'll give you something to remember."

The negro scratched his woolly head, undecided whether to tell the truth and lose the promised reward, or to make up a lie to suit the occasion. But, being entirely ignorant of what might be the issue of this strange questioning, he concluded it was best to be truthful, and replied,

"No, massa, neber see no sich hereabouts."

Stanley knew him to be a sly, bright fellow, and, fixing his eyes on him significantly, said,

"Juniper, can I trust you to do something for me, if I pay you well for it?"

"Yes, massa, on'y ole massa might find it out," was the reply, in a dubious tone.

"He need know nothing about it, if you are careful," said the tempter. "Now listen to me. You like money, of course?"

"Hit me dere!" replied the boy, snapping his fingers and showing a row of gleaming ivory. "Dis nigger an't no fool!"

"Now, be careful, and do as I tell you," said Stanley, smiling. "Such a man as I have described will come to your master's house soon, — to-day or to-morrow, probably, — and I want you to watch and find out what he comes for, and how long he stays, and where he is going. When you know all, come and tell me. I will give you a guinea; and if you find out without letting any one know, I will give you two. Do you understand?"

“Yes, massa. Dis chile knows how to keep dark with both eyes open.”

“Decidedly dark, I should think!” said Stanley, glancing at his ebony visage; and, slipping a piece of silver into Juniper’s hand to insure his fidelity, he added, “I shall expect to hear from you before long. You know where I live?”

“Yes, massa!” replied the negro, and they parted, the one to plan and scheme, the other, full of his new charge, to proceed rapidly homeward. The first person he saw was his young mistress, who was wandering listlessly from room to room, too anxious and excited to be able to remain quiet, and with the shadow of fear or trouble dimming the light of her eyes.

How wearily the day passed to her! How its hours dragged themselves along in the monotonous gloom of the prison where Percy counted their flight by the beatings of his own heart, throbbing high and strong with the hope of freedom!

In spite of the hardships he had endured from cold and hunger, and the discomforts of his close confinement, the past week had been the happiest he had experienced for months. He had received daily communications from Evelyn. The fear of her father’s displeasure was removed, and, in her pity for the sufferings of his imprisonment, she had betrayed her feelings and her hopes in these little perfumed billets much more freely than maidenly reserve would have allowed, had their circumstances been different, but with a naïveté so perfectly delightful to Percy, that he sometimes half dreaded the

termination of a captivity which was thus alleviated. This evening was to decide his fate. Happiness, freedom, home, and an honorable career in the service of his country, would be his, if the attempt succeeded. If it failed, there would remain to him only a speedy and ignominious death.

The alternative presented itself again and again, as he paced the narrow bounds of his cell in the gloom of twilight; but he thrust it from him with the energy of a brave spirit. He *would* succeed. No anxiety should embitter the moment which was to restore him to Evelyn. No dark foreboding should dim the brightness of the few hours he hoped to enjoy in her presence.

By means of writing materials furnished by Jem, they had arranged the details of their plan of escape without seeming to communicate with each other; and now, when the evening meal was brought in, he found means to ascertain, by a word and a sign, that all was ready for the adventure. He did not dare lie down, lest the cold and darkness should overcome his senses with sleep; he could not walk the floor without treading on his companions; and therefore he waited until nearly midnight, leaning against the stone wall, on which the moisture from the breath of the sleepers around him congealed in thick frost, listening to the measured tread of the sentinel, and, notwithstanding his solicitude, scarcely able to keep his enfeebled system from yielding to the drowsiness induced by the chill night-air, and his constrained position. At length the key turned in the lock, and a thrill ran through his whole frame, restoring him at once to life and energy, as he saw the door

slowly open, and felt on his arm the friendly grasp of his liberator.

The moment the door was closed behind them, Jem led him to a dark corner under the stairs leading to the upper stories of the building, and assisted him to dress in clothes he had provided, similar to those he was himself accustomed to wear. This done, his face was bandaged in a thick woollen cloth, a large hat pulled over his eyes, and Jem's plaid cloak transferred to his shoulders.

"There," said Jem, in a whisper, when all was completed, "now I think you'll do. Take my gun and walk up and down afore the door here, till the guard is changed — that won't be long. When you hear Tom Shave coming up, you better start to go down, so as to have your back to the light when he meets you. Just stop to give him the gun, and, if he speaks to you, make a sign as if your tooth ached awful bad, and hurry on. When you get to the door, old Hunks, there, 'll be waitin' to let you out; but he's half drunk this time o' night, and he won't trouble ye. The only danger is from the sentinel at the gate. He allers holds the lantern right in a feller's face when we go out, but you're so wrapped up I don't think he'll notice you particular. Fact, I should most think 't was me myself, if I did n't know. So, good-by. I'll go stow myself away before the guard changes. Mind what I told you, and march right out after the guard, — and the countersign between you and marm is 'Sir William.' Don't mind marm, if she seems a little cross. She's a good-natured old cretur, but she's an awful baby about me."

“Good-by!” said Percy. “I will not say how much I thank you, for *words* would poorly express my feelings; but I hope ——”

“Pshaw!” interrupted Jem, “don’t talk to me in that way! Only mind your eye, for all depends on you, now.”

So saying, he wrung his companion’s hand with a parting grasp, and, turning away, rapidly ascended the stairs to his hiding-place. There he remained concealed effectually until morning, when, hearing no one in the upper halls of the prison, he emerged from his nook and sauntered slowly down stairs. Near the door he found the jailer gossiping over the fire in his little room with some of his cronies, and, joining their conversation, sat with them till they went out, when he accompanied them. Thus gaining the street unsuspected and unquestioned, he speedily rejoined his mother, who, clasping him convulsively in her arms, wept over him as if she had not expected to see him again.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPY.

MEANTIME, Percy Grey, thoroughly disguised in his new dress, had hardly commenced his duties as sentinel, when the sound of voices and the rattling of arms outside, followed by a loud rapping at the door, announced that the moment of liberation was at hand. After some difficulty and delay, the head jailer was sufficiently aroused from his drunken sleep to open the door, and in another moment a step was heard on the stairs.

Percy descended a few steps to meet Tom Shave, who took the gun, with a muttered curse on the weather, and left him at liberty to descend. He went on rapidly, and found himself in the yard of the prison. Here the guard was just ready to march, and, taking his place behind them, he muffled his face in the cloak, and followed them out. His heart beat rapidly as he saw the sentinel raise his lantern and flash the light into the faces of each one who passed him; but it was done mechanically, and the man did not notice it was a thin, pale face, and not the healthy countenance of Jem Henderson, which was wrapped in these bandages.

The gate shut behind him, and the guard marched down street, while Percy, as he had been directed, went in the other direction, and turned down the first cross street. Here a woman came suddenly from the projecting angle of a building, and, laying her hand on his cloak, accosted him with the words agreed on.

“Is this Sir William?”

“It is; let us proceed!” was the reply, and his guide led the way rapidly through side streets and lanes, where in the darkness they were unobserved, until they arrived at Mr. Chester’s house. No light was visible, but Mrs. Henderson, taking a stick from the ground, struck three times against one of the front windows, and immediately the door was opened cautiously. He turned to thank his conductor, who had preserved an obstinate silence during their walk; but she had already disappeared, and he entered the house. The door closed behind him instantly. All around was dark, but a voice cautioned him to silence, and a grasp on his hand led him through the hall into a back room, where a fire was blazing. Percy tore from his face the bandage, and, dropping his cloak, cast a quick glance around. A young girl stood by the table, with one hand half extended, as if in welcome, while the other was pressed to her heart. He sprang forward, and in another moment Evelyn’s voice was in his ear, and her agitated face was hiding its blushes on his breast.

But after the first moments of rapture, wherein both the past and the future were forgotten in the blissful present, this

interview was one of hurried, tremulous preparation, of sighs that came instead of smiles, of smiles which died quivering on pale lips that strove to utter words of cheer. For danger was around them — danger which each might have faced fearlessly alone, but shrank from meeting when it involved the other.

Refreshed by food, and a plentiful ablution, which his week of prison life had made imperative, Percy stood, at length, in the hall, ready to depart. He wore the suit of coarse cloth provided by Mr. Chester, whose servant he was to represent until he was out of the power of his enemies; and that gentleman was reiterating his instructions respecting what should be said and done, provided any one recognized or suspected him. But Percy was thinking of something dearer to him than his own safety, and still he lingered in the shadow where Evelyn stood, nerving her soul for the farewell she would not make more painful by the tears she longed to shed.

“Come, it will be dawn by the time we reach the riverside, where I hope we shall find the boatman waiting. Are you ready now?” said Mr. Chester.

“There is something I must say before I go, and yet I hardly know how to say it,” replied Percy. “Before I left the prison, I thought my first words to you, Mr. Chester, would be those of gratitude for this great kindness to me. I do not speak now of my life, which you have probably preserved; for my life was as nothing to me when I thought you meant to withhold all I craved to make existence precious. You have now permitted me to entertain hopes so bright, that I am half

afraid to go away without hearing them repeated from your own lips, lest a happiness so great should in some way be lost to me. When we shall meet again, God only knows; but, if that time ever comes, may Evelyn be mine — my wife?"

"You ask much from me, young man," said Mr. Chester, with strong emotion, "and I cannot answer you now. That my opposition to your wishes was not owing to want of interest in you, you may well believe, after the proof this night has given; but, as you say, God only knows when we shall meet again, and these are times of great uncertainty and peril. Be assured, however, that I have no power to do anything to make Evelyn unhappy. With the promise this implies you must rest content. Let us hasten now, for you have lingered too long already. We must be away before the neighbors spy our proceedings, and my little girl here must remove the traces of our night's entertainment before the servants arise."

As he spoke he opened the door, and, after one more farewell, they went forth together, and Evelyn was left alone. O! at that moment, how she longed to go with him — to contend with difficulty, to brave danger, to struggle, to suffer, if need be — anything, rather than the inaction to which her sex doomed her. To sit still and wait, to watch and fear in lonely silence, to hush the throbs of her anxious heart and dress her face in smiles, to hide her true life, and fill up her time with the idle nothings which custom demanded of women in her station, seemed a martyrdom, compared to which the toil, the conflict, the excitement, to which he was going, was a

pastime. The occupation of restoring order to the household arrangements was over long before her father's return informed her that Percy had set out on his perilous voyage across the river, — perilous, because of the floating ice which obstructed navigation; and till then, and afterwards, she could only retire to the solitude of her chamber and calm herself to *wait* — that most impotent and helpless employment, in which woman so often consumes her days.

It was late on the evening after Percy's departure before Juniper could obtain an opportunity to go to Stanley's lodgings, in order to report to him the result of his surveillance. When he arrived there he discovered, much to his chagrin, that his employer was absent, and, after waiting some time, was obliged to defer seeing him till the next day.

Stanley, who breakfasted at a late hour for those primitive times, was lounging next morning over his coffee and toast, when a bustle was heard in the entry, and, in answer to some remonstrance from the servant, Juniper's voice exclaimed,

“Don't tell me nothin' 'bout no breakfas'! Dis chile don't want no go-betweenes! My bus'ness bery private — must see massa Stanley hesef!”

Fearful the talkative negro might reveal more than he intended should be made public, Stanley rang the hand-bell which was used to summon his valet, and ordered him to show the person in waiting up stairs. This being done, and the servant having retired, he beckoned the negro to follow him into an inner room, and carefully locked the door before a word was spoken.

“Now, Juniper, what is it?” he asked.

“Well, massa, dat it — *I* say. It am bery lucky for massa he nominate dis chile for dat yer bus’ness. Now, some niggers, ’pears like dey got sense too, but dey neber disflecks ’pon dere abocations; and dese ondisflectin’ niggers, massa, don’t neber seem to pergress, somehow. But, den, it’s edication — all edication, massa. Folks what lives in de fus’ fam’lies, dey hab great many ’vantages, massa, you notice. Now, ef dis chile had n’t had no circumspection ’bout dis yer bus’ness —

“For heaven’s sake, come to the point! Tell your story. I’ll listen another time to your opinion of yourself!” interrupted Stanley.

“Why, massa, I’s jes’ sayin’, ef I had n’t had circumspection —”

“Come to the point, you fool!” repeated his hearer.

“Why, massa, I *is* coming’ — I jes’ sayin’ — ’cause I hab so much circumspection —”

“You seem to have not a little circumlocution, too!” said Stanley, who could not help laughing, in spite of his vexation.

“P’raps so!” answered Juniper, grinning and scraping his feet with an air that showed he felt himself highly complimented to be the subject of a word five syllables long, — “p’raps so; massa knows. I been ’spectin’ dis long time I had ’siderable circum — what dat massa say?” he added, delighted with this addition to his vocabulary.

“I said you understood blowing your own trumpet!” replied Stanley, impatiently. “Come, I’ve had enough of this. Tell me, in few words — what did you see?”

“ I did n’t see nothin’ ! ” said Juniper, sulkily.

“ What did you come here for, then, you blunderhead ! ” thundered Stanley. “ Get out of my sight ! ”

“ O, massa, don’t be so ’furiated ! ” said Juniper, alarmed lest he might lose his reward. “ I ’s comin’ to de p’int bery soon ; but massa can’t hab no comprehension ’bout it ’thout I circulates it to him.”

“ Go on, then,” said Stanley, in a resigned tone, perceiving the stream of words would flow, and waiting to see them bring the facts he wished to obtain.

“ Dat it, massa, — I is goin’ on. De true fac’ is, de whole time I ’s watchin’ I did n’t see nothin’ ; so when night come I ’marks to myself, ‘ Nip,’ — dey calls me Nip for shortness ; — ‘ you better go sleep, so he be sure to keep both eyes open to-morrow ; ’ ’cause, ye see, massa, looking ’bout ’round de corner all day am pertic’lar circumspectious work. So I goes up stair, and I see ole massa comin’ down, and says he, ‘ What ! do you go to bed so early, boy ? You has a talent for sleeping ! ’ ‘ Yes, massa,’ said I, ‘ yes, massa, dis chile hab talent for mos’ eberyting, on’y massa don’t know ’bout it allers.’ I say dis ’cause I neber did t’ink ole massa ’preciated me.”

“ Proceed ! ” said Stanley, as the negro paused.

“ Yes, massa — dat ’s it — I is percedin’. So I say, ‘ Massa don’t know about it allers,’ and he laugh and go down, and I goes up. Den I disflects what for old massa up here in de attic where de niggers sleeps. I neber know ’bout him bein’ dere ’fore. But, as I ’s sayin’, I has great deal

circumspection, and I disfleets 'pon it till I gets sleepy. Somehow, massa, I's allers noticed 'bout dat, dat 'flectin' has de effect ob gettin' dis chile to sleep. Well, I done slept a good while, but 't last I woke up. De room was mighty dark, so I knows it was n't mornin', but I hears a little noise. At fus', massa, I's little obfuscated for fear it's ghosts; but I gets up and makes up de bad face, so ef de ghost see me dey t'ink I's one of dem, and I creeps down de garret stair, to find out a discivery where de noise was. So 't last I feels de door, and I finds it shet, and when I try de latch I finds it locked. 'O, ho!' says I, 'ole massa, dat it, is it? Dat what you up here for?—put lock on de door!' Den you see, massa, dis chile smell de rat."

"Yes, yes!" said Stanley, impatiently, "go on."

"Yes, massa, dat it — I *is* goin' on. I find de door lock, and I say, 'Nip, my boy, 't an't no use stayin' here, for ef de ghosts don't catch you, de rheumatiz will;' and so I creeps back to bed, and I sleeps dere pertic'lar quiet till mornin'."

"Is that all?" said Stanley, in a tone of disappointment, as the negro paused.

"No, massa, dat it — dat *an't* all. When de risin' bell ring we gets up, and de fus' ting, when Sally go into de hall, she observes de big clock, and she 'sclain out, 'Bress my star! what ole massa 'bout let nigger sleep so for!' And sure 'nuff we was an hour later 'n common. So we circulates 'round — Sally and me — to make de fire and get breakfas' — pertic'larly, Sally — an by-'m-by I hears her 'sclain out, 'Nip, what for you did n't fill de wood-box las'

night?' 'I did!' says I. 'You didn't,' says she, 'fur dere an't one solirtary stick here.' An', sure 'nuff, dere wan't. Sally was 'bout right, massa, but I fill de wood-box, for all dat. Well, we make de fire, an' she go get breakfas', and I hears her 'selaim out agin, 'Nip, you brack fool, what fur you steal all dat meat I sot away fur breakfus'?' 'Cause, yer see, massa Stanley, I neber could 'suade Sally she ought to speak 'spectful to me when she's mad. Somehow, massa, I's noticed folks most commonly is apt to speak on'spectful when dey's mad."

"Go on with your story," said his auditor; "don't stop to moralize!"

"Yes, massa, dat it — I *an't* stoppin'. She say dat, an' I say, 'How could I, Sally, when I see you lock de door and shet up de closet wid your own idencatle hands, last night, jest 'fore I went up star'?' 'So I did,' says she, 'an' dere is sure 'nuff witches in dis house.' So jes' den old massa he come down, and she tell him, and he laugh and say maybe de rats get it; an' den I say, 'fore I t'ink, 'Yes, massa Chester, I smell de rat las' night.' Den he stop, and look at me bery 'quisitive a minute, and say, 'What you mean?' An' I say I don't mean nothin', an' he laugh an' go on. Dat all about it, massa, on'y ole massa 'pears like he 'spected me all day, an' kep' me workin' 'bout in a way bery tryin' to dis chile's feelin's, so I neber find no chance to get here —"

"And your master — how did he look? — how did he seem to-day?" said Stanley, eagerly. "Did he appear as usual?"

"He 'peared *more 'n* usual!" replied Juniper. "Kep'

comin' to see ef I was workin', and kind o' maundered 'round the house, like he felt worried."

"Strange!" ejaculated Stanley, thoughtfully.

"Yes, massa, dat it—it strange. I's been disflectin' on it all day. Ef dis chile had n't had so much circum-spection, dere would n't hab been any 'scoveries made 'bout it!"

"I don't see as you have discovered much," said Stanley; "but, since you seem to have done your best, I will pay you, as I promised. You are sure, then, that the man I spoke of did not come to your house?"

"Dono 'bout dat, massa. Dis chile neber see nobody; but, den, who eat up de meat and who burnt up all de wood las' night, massa? Dat it!"

"True," replied Stanley. "There can be little doubt that some one was there last night; but if so, the person must now be out of my reach. You can watch, however, and if you see anything suspicious, come and tell me. I will pay you well; only be cautious."

"Well, massa, dat it. I's been 'flectin' about dat. 'Pears like massa ought to tell dis chile sump'en 'bout what for he want know 'bout dis yer."

"It's none of your business, boy," said Stanley, with a frown, "and, upon second thought, I don't care to employ you further. It's very little consequence to me who this person is, so you need n't trouble yourself about it any more. Here is your pay," he added, giving him a guinea, "and hark, now! if I ever hear of your lispin' a word of this conversa-

tion to any one, I'll have the soldiers catch you and flog you within an inch of your life!"

So saying, he held open a door opposite the one by which they had entered the room, and Juniper, shrinking from this threat as if he already felt the lash, darted down a private stairway to the street.

Stanley had hardly regained his seat at the breakfast-table before the door opened to admit one of his friends, Col. Harcourt, who, gayly bidding him good-morning, declared it was the luckiest thing in the world to find him breakfasting, for a long walk had given him a ravenous appetite; and, ordering fresh toast and coffee, Stanley made room for him at the little round table. They chatted together for some time, giving each other the current news respecting business and pleasure, until a pause occurred in the conversation, and Stanley said,

"You have not yet told me why you are abroad so early this morning, and where you have been walking so far."

"I was aroused early," replied Col. Harcourt, "by a cock-and-bull story my servant brought me from the street, to the effect that the prisoners had broken *en masse* from the Sugar-House jail, killed the jailers, and massacred the guards. So I jumped out of bed to find out the truth!"

"What was the truth?" said his friend. "It is strange I had n't sooner heard this wonderful story."

"Strange, indeed," replied Harcourt, "especially as another version of the affair had a tinge of the supernatural. Some affirm that an angel appeared at night, wrapped in a sheet

of fire, and carried the prisoner off through the roof of the building. The majority incline to the latter opinion, as demanding the greatest stretch of credulity, and being sustained by want of evidence in any other direction."

"What is the foundation of all this?" asked Stanley, laughing. "Has there been an escape?"

"Yes, one man has managed to elude the vigilance of the guard, though how it was done remains a mystery," said his friend, carelessly.

"The walls are high, and must now be slippery with frost; and it would be hard work to scale them, even if he had help in getting outside the jail-doors," said Stanley. "It is hardly possible the guard could have been bribed, if the jailers could be."

"Cunningham takes care there is n't much chance of temptation left in that direction," replied Harcourt; "and it appears, upon examination, that the jailer and his attendants are a party entirely separate from the guard; so there could hardly have been collusion between them, even supposing our grim Hessians susceptible of 'the quality of mercy.'"

"It would have to beat upon their heads like hailstones, instead of dropping 'like the gentle dew from heaven,' as Shakspeare declares it was wont to do in old times," said Stanley. "Then there was an examination into the affair?"

"Yes. Cunningham went into it very fiercely last night when it was discovered, but nothing could be proved. The head jailer is a man of his own choosing, and none would suspect him of undue compassion after one glance at his face.

He declares that he opened the door at the usual hour, to let out one attendant and let the other in; and these two boys confirm the testimony. As the policy now is to conciliate the citizens, it was n't thought best to stir ill-blood by making an example of either of the three. One of them told, however, that, upon opening the cell where Major Grey had been confined, some of his companions made a great ado about having seen the door open in the night, and some one take the man out. But the others denied it, and so the mystery remains unsolved."

"What did you say was the name of the man who escaped?" asked Stanley, starting, and coloring violently.

"Grey—Major Grey. One of the staff of Gen. Lee, whom our gallant dragoons brought off so adroitly, the other day, under the direction of your humble servant."

Stanley did not notice the bow and the smile accompanying this remark. Anger and surprise kept him silent, and it required all his self-possession to conceal his emotion from his friend. At length he said,

"Why don't you pursue him? Cunningham won't, surely, let him slip through his fingers in this way!" In spite of his care, his tones evinced his interest in the question, and Col. Harcourt looked up in surprise.

"Pooh!" said he, "let the poor devil run! There are plenty left, and what signifies one more or less? Pursuit would be hopeless now, even if it were worth while to attempt it, for he had twenty-four hours' start before the escape was discovered."

“He must have friends in the city, of course,” said Stanley. “Is it suspected who they are?”

“They’ve taken good care to keep out of the way,” answered Harcourt. “But Mr. Chester testified to the good character of one of the jailers, a boy who used to be in his service; so suspicion falls mainly upon the other assistant, a low fellow, who they learn was once in the rebel army. But it is a matter of no consequence, and, for the sake of impartiality, both have been turned out of office.”

“Mr. Chester testified, did he?” exclaimed Stanley, with a sardonic laugh. “By the Lord, his testimony was worth considerable!”

“I suppose so; it seemed satisfactory. But why do you take such an interest in this trifling affair? You look fairly bloodthirsty. What is it to you?”

The question recalled Stanley’s self-possession, and, assuming an air of indifference, he answered,

“You know I am interested in the Chesters. They are my very particular friends.”

“True enough,” said Harcourt; “and that reminds me to inquire how matters are progressing between yourself and your *belle fiancée*; for I have heard a rumor that she ignores your engagement, and I fancied the queenly Evelyn treated you coolly when I last saw you together at Madam Rushton’s *soirée*.”

“Ah, I remember that evening,” replied Stanley, coloring a little. “The fair Evelyn was a little out of spirits that day. But you know the old adage respecting lovers’ quarrels.”

“They are said to lead to an increase of the tender passion, though I never could exactly see how,” rejoined Harcourt, gayly. “But success to your suit! and I think you are the luckiest fellow in the king’s dominions, to gain a beauty and a fortune simply by crossing the sea for it. You must have been born with a gold spoon in your mouth.”

“Faith,” said Stanley, “it is no light penalty to pay, dancing attendance on a wilful young lady through a winter in this barbarous country.”

“Why not be married at once, then?” asked Harcourt as he rose to go. “‘*Veni, vidi, vici!*’ that’s the motto for a hero of your stamp. Besides, the war is about over, for we are driving that fellow Washington into a corner; and I hear he can hardly keep his ragamuffins together long enough to make a decent retreat, — fighting is out of the question. So, it would really be a charity to get up some wedding festivities for the benefit of the poor fellows who are dying of ennui all around you.”

“*Nous verrons!*” replied Stanley, smiling, as Col. Harcourt left the room. But the moment the door was shut, his face became dark and stern with the passions he had suppressed so long. He could have torn his hair and gnashed his teeth with the fury that possessed him.

To have it bandied from mouth to mouth among his gay companions that he was a rejected suitor, — refused by the simple American girl he had avowedly crossed the ocean to claim as his bride! To be unable, with all the magnificence his alliance would procure her, to win her from his

secret rival! The thought was intolerable. And, to reflect that while he had been hesitating to use his power, while he had listened to those kindlier feelings that made him reluctant to force himself upon the woman whose love he had sought, she had been successfully planning the escape of his hated competitor! If he had known of Percy Grey's capture, how strict should have been the vigilance, how hopeless the attempt to escape; nay, how speedily could he have rid himself forever of this obstacle in his path! His brows contracted with a deeper frown as he remembered the gallows standing behind the Provost jail, and the midnight executions, in which so many victims of war from the crowded prisons had perished without any previous trial — perished unquestioned and unknown.

Then his thoughts reverted to Evelyn. She had seen her lover, and who could tell what vows had been exchanged, what plans formed, which might entirely defeat his own wishes, and leave him, baffled and scorned, without even the power of revenge?

He sprang to his feet as the idea suggested itself; for, with Mr. Chester's reputation for loyalty, he could at any time obtain permission to leave the city with his daughter; and, if they felt themselves in danger, would they not speedily use this privilege to place themselves beyond reach of British power? No man is wholly vile, and Stanley had endured many a struggle between his good and evil natures before he could entirely silence the voice of honor and conscience, and bring himself to use the knowledge which circumstances had

placed in his hands. But from this moment his resolution was taken, and the mercenary motives which had most powerfully inclined him to this act when first thought of were now almost wholly forgotten in the violent passions that convulsed his soul.

CHAPTER X.

THE STRUGGLE.

ALTHOUGH fully determined to carry forward his own purposes, without regarding what it might cost others, Stanley preferred to wait until evening before communicating them to Mr. Chester.

That evening Evelyn shone as a "bright particular star" at one of the weekly soirées given by the élite of the city. Her feelings were little in consonance with such scenes, but it was necessary, in order to avoid remark, that she should not withdraw from the society in which her high connections, her beauty and accomplishments, made her a general favorite. It was late when she returned home, and, as was her custom, she went directly to her father's library, to bid him good-night before retiring to rest; but, to her great surprise, she found the door locked, and from within came a low murmur of voices in earnest conversation.

Curious and somewhat alarmed at this unusual occurrence, she returned to the parlor, where Juniper was dozing before the fire he had kept burning till her arrival; and, dismissing him to his bed, she reclined on one of the cushioned settees,

located in the deep recesses by the chimney, and abandoned herself to thought, as she waited the departure of this late visitor. A little while her mind lingered on the present, and then slowly her eyelids drooped, and the memories hidden in her heart rose up before her. An expression of calm and intense happiness settled on her features, and, though she seemed to sleep, her soul had wandered into a region more distinct and beautiful than the shadowy land of dreams.

At length the door leading into the library opened, and the slow, half-hesitating step of Stanley made no noise on the thick carpet covering the floor. He approached her, and paused a moment, half in regret and half in triumph, as he gazed on her exceeding beauty. A robe of dark satin brocade contrasted well with her delicate complexion, scarcely less purely white than the pearls which rose and fell with the heaving of her bosom, and encircled the arms clasped above it. Her hair was always arranged in a simple and classic mode, untouched by powder or pomatum, to suit her father's taste; and now her head, usually so stately in its gracefulness, was thrown back in the abandon of repose, revealing the perfect contour of her features, and her broad, noble brow.

Before he found words to address her, she became conscious of his presence, and, rising hastily, regarded him with wonder and a slight confusion. For a short time neither spoke; but Evelyn was first to recover herself, and then asked, coldly, to what she owed the honor of this late visit.

"I fear it is an undesired honor," said Stanley, stung by the frigid politeness of her tones; "but pray be seated, Miss

Chester, for I have something of importance to say to you, and, late as is the hour, it must be said to-night."

His voice was low, almost solemn, and she saw it was only by a great effort he appeared calm. There was something in his manner that struck her with a sudden terror. The rich blood which had mantled her cheek receded, and she sank trembling into a chair beside her. When Stanley spoke again, his words came rapidly, like those of a man who is forcing himself to perform a disagreeable or dreaded act.

"I have been talking with your father, and, I regret to say, he has become implicated in a late occurrence, the consequences of which will be unpleasant, if my duty to Gen. Howe compels me to reveal the facts I have discovered."

He paused, but Evelyn could ask no questions. Her hands were clasped unconsciously, and her eyes fixed on him with a look of frozen and helpless terror. She understood that Percy's escape was known, and expected to hear he had been recaptured. Stanley continued,

"You know, I perceive, to what I refer. You heard of the escape of an American prisoner named Grey ——"

"Where is he?" Evelyn gasped.

"He? — He made good his escape. It is not of him I came to speak," answered her companion.

"Thank God!" burst from Evelyn's lips, and, hiding her face in her hands, she wept violently.

Her tears relieved the feelings so suddenly excited, and, blushing that she should have thought only of Percy when her father was in danger, she strove to regain her composure.

Now that the anxiety which had paralyzed her faculties was past, she knew instinctively what Col. Stanley wished to ask as the price of his silence as to the knowledge he had in some unaccountable manner acquired. As she sat with her face still hidden, thinking how she should answer him, he advanced a step nearer, and said, sternly,

“Have you, then, no care for your father? Do you not know the danger in which this escape involves him?”

“What proof is there that my father knew aught of it? A man in his position is not to be accused upon suspicion, merely,” she answered, with sudden defiance.

“There is proof—ample proof,” said he. “Nay, your father has acknowledged the act.”

“If that be,” she replied, in surprise, “he must have known there was nothing in the act which any honorable mind will condemn. Major Grey was —”

“A Yankee rebel!” sneered Stanley, as she hesitated.

“Be it so!” she continued, in a calm, firm voice, and her eyes did not quail beneath the gaze they encountered. “Be it so; he was, nevertheless, my father’s friend, and the affianced husband of my father’s child.”

Stanley replied, in an excited tone: “You strangely misjudge the men who will conduct this trial, and are entirely ignorant of the rules of war, if you imagine that for either of these reasons Mr. Chester will go unharmed. Depend upon it, if I communicate the facts, which I alone know, he must suffer condign punishment.”

“And will you do so?” she asked, pleadingly.

“That remains with you,” replied he. “If you were my wife —”

“Is it possible,” said Evelyn, starting from her seat in indignation, “is it possible that you, who are a soldier; and should therefore be honorable, can wish to claim an unwilling bride — to purchase the hand you could not win? Can it be from you I am about to receive a proposition so degrading to us both?”

Stanley’s eyes drooped beneath the scornful gaze fixed upon him. “Hear me,” he said, gently, “and be not too severe if I seem unkind. I have offered you name, rank, and fortune, a station in life the proudest might not disdain to hold, and you have refused them all. I offer them again, simply adding that by being my wife you will make it my first duty to shield your name and honor; and, therefore, the duty now devolving upon me as a soldier to deliver up the enemies of my king will be lost in the higher claim which Mr. Chester will have upon me, as your father. You rejected my love, but will not your filial affection lead you to consider the subject anew in this aspect?”

“Why should you regard my father as an enemy of the crown because he helped save the life of a fellow-creature?” answered she, after a momentary silence. “Surely there have been victims enough in this dreadful war! Do not blind your better reason by such sophistry. At least, allow me to think of this at leisure.”

“It cannot be,” replied Stanley, in a low tone. “It were only cruelty to yourself and me to protract this struggle.

I shall not leave the house until I have your promise to become my wife."

Evelyn's spirit rose against such coercion. "Remain here, then, alone," she said, proudly. "I do not fear your threat. For your own sake, you dare not be so dishonorable. If this thing were known, it would brand you with such infamy you would shrink from the eyes of your fellow-men. That you could plan a scheme so vile, is enough! I would sooner lie down in my grave than marry you!"

She was turning away with a disdainful gesture, when he seized her hand and forcibly detained her.

"Stay, proud girl, and hear me!" he cried, "Your father's life and honor are in my hands. I can at any moment ruin and dishonor him forever — not for this alone — this is a trifle in comparison. Your father is a traitor and a spy!"

His whole frame shook with passion, and his eyes seemed to flash fire, while he grasped her wrists with a force really painful; but she quailed not at his violence.

"This is simply impossible," she replied, with a calm smile of incredulity. "Either you are mistaken, or you are deceiving me. He may have risked his own safety to save the life of a friend; though, since he has acknowledged the deed to you, I believe he cannot anticipate much danger from having it known. But he could never betray confidence. He could never be a spy!"

"I have told you the truth," Stanley repeated. "Accident put me in possession of some papers, taken from the

person of a pedler who was killed in a drunken brawl. They revealed to me this secret. Your own letter to Mr. Grey was among them."

"And you read it!" she exclaimed, her beautiful lip curling with contempt.

"I did," he replied, boldly. "It was my duty to use all means to discover the enemies of my king. A similar train of circumstances placed in my hands the proof that Mr. Chester had assisted Grey to escape. Were these facts known, nothing could save him from the hangman's hands. Pardon me," he added, as she uttered a cry of horror, "but you force me to speak plainly. You have scorned my love and doubted my word—now the power is in my hands. Consider well how you decide, for I declare to you that upon your decision depends not only your father's life, but the honorable name he values still more. I have talked with him, and he has sent me to you. I have told you his crime, but I have not painted as I might the ignominy and terror of the death which is its punishment."

Evelyn released her hands from his grasp, and, clasping them together, sank at his feet.

"O, then," she cried, "be generous—be merciful! This fatal secret is known to you alone—let it be buried in your breast; save my father from this awful doom, and my prayers shall call down blessings upon every moment of your after life—my gratitude shall kindle for you a warm and pure affection in my soul! Will you not be richly rewarded in the consciousness of doing good, so dear to every noble heart? Will

you not be happier than if wedded to a cold, unloving wife? Pity me, I implore you! Take back those cruel words! Tell me you will save us from this misery, and no language can express what I shall feel for you — my benefactor — my preserver!”

Stern and unmoved, Stanley heard this passionate appeal. There was even an expression of malignant triumph in his face as he looked down on the pallid, quivering features raised to him in supplication. He replied,

“Evelyn Chester, I have known these things ever since the evening, a fortnight since, when in this very room you rejected my hand with pride, almost with insult. I have thought of this subject in all its bearings. I have anticipated all the opposition I should meet with, all the entreaties I should hear, and I have decided to claim you as my wife. Do you think now I shall falter, and turn from my purpose? That would be indeed a weakness and a double disgrace. No words of yours can move me. My pride, my self-respect, all my aims and ambitions for the future, alike forbid it. I await your decision.”

Evelyn did not cry out or faint, though the very springs of life seemed failing her as she heard these words, and, unable to support her trembling frame, she sank upon the carpet, and buried her face in the cushions of the seat beside her. She did not weep — she could hardly think. She only knew she must become the wife of that bold, bad man, or give her father to his vengeance; and every fibre of her body seemed to shudder and shrink from either alternative. For a long time

there was silence, and Stanley stood uneasily watching that intense mental struggle, half fearing what its issue might be.

When she raised her face again, it was frightful to see its look of fixed despair,—the rigid contraction of its muscles, as if in deadly pain. She pressed her hands to her brow, and tottered as she arose to her feet; but when her companion attempted to assist her, she cried, huskily, as she recoiled from him,

“Don’t touch me! Stay here — I will return, but I must speak first with my father!”

She paused once or twice, and her limbs seemed failing her, as she proceeded to the library; but when she reached the door the sight which met her eyes recalled to her the mysterious calmness and strength wherewith the heart of woman is girded by the necessity of acting as comforter and supporter to one beloved.

Mr. Chester was sitting by the table as Stanley had left him, his face bowed down to his knees and covered by his hands, while tears fell slowly between the thin fingers. He looked up as the door opened, but dropped his face again instantly, with a groan, followed by a burst of convulsive sobs that seemed to rend his heart. It is terrible to see an old man weep.

“Father,” said the low, sweet voice of his child, “dear father, will you not speak to me?”

He made no answer, but, without changing his position, threw one arm around her neck and drew her towards him. She knelt down and laid her cheek against his tear-wet face.

“Father,” she whispered, “is there no other way?”

“None, none!” he groaned, bitterly.

“Then it shall be done!” was the reply, and her voice trembled not, though she knew those words spoke her doom.

“It is not for *life!*” murmured the old man, at length, as if talking to himself. “I should not fear *death!* But for our name, our honorable name, to be branded with that shameful word! For the last of our ancient race to die by the hangman’s hands! — O, horrible! I would not care for *life*, but they will take away my *honor!*”

“Dear father, be comforted!” again spoke that voice beside him. But, unheeding, he went on:

“And for you, Evelyn! — who will care for you? Child of a dishonored parent, what will become of you? Will the grave close over you, too? Will you die broken-hearted? O, my child, my child!”

“Father, hear me!” said Evelyn. “We will live together! You shall not die!”

He shook his head mournfully. “There is no escape!” he said. “It was with no premeditated design of treachery I entered into communication with Gen. Lee. I admired the brave and gallant man who had given up so much for his adopted country, and now struggles against such fearful difficulties. He gave me his confidence, — imparted to me a design by which he might, in one brilliant stroke, turn the fortunes of the war. He waited to hear from me — information that my position enabled me readily to send him. I sent it. There was no wrong in the act; but there is danger, fatal

danger and disgrace, in the discovery ; and now all is known to Stanley, and from him there is no escape."

"There is escape,—there is safety for you. I will be his wife," said Evelyn, firmly. "O, my father, be comforted!"

Mr. Chester clasped her to his breast in a long, close embrace, and again scalding drops fell like rain upon the eyes which, through all this terrible scene, had not shed a tear.

"I will save you!" she whispered, softly.

"And be yourself the sacrifice!" said her father, after a short silence, and with dreary calmness. "No, that shall never be! What is my worthless life? Let them take it, since God and my own conscience know I believed myself right in what I did. Evelyn, blessed child, you have given me courage and strength. Could you dream I would make you the victim?"

"O," said she, earnestly, "can you think it will be a sacrifice to me, to save your life? Shall I ever know happiness again, if I cannot avert your doom? O, I beseech you, as you value my peace of mind, oppose me not in this thing!"

"It must not be!" replied Mr. Chester, resolutely. "My whole soul blesses you, but I will not accept life on such terms;—your heart broken, your happiness gone forever!"

"My happiness!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Will it not be the purest joy to see you beside me—to make your old age peaceful? Think how beautiful our life has been!—how pleasant is our home! Will you destroy it all? Will you leave me alone in the world?"

Mr. Chester wavered. Visions of past enjoyment came

over him, and the love of life, strongest in old age, returned in full force. He looked troubled, and spoke doubtfully.

“If you would not be wretched — if we could live together as we have done! But that bad man! You cannot love him! — nay, you love another!”

“Hush!” said she, interrupting him. “We must not speak of that, now. I will be Col. Stanley’s wife. He will not expect *love*, and I *can obey!*”

“But he may be unkind to you, my darling! — If you marry him, you will be so entirely in his power!”

“I am a woman — no gentleman will ill-treat a woman,” she answered, gently.

He sat a little while in deep thought, and then, starting suddenly from his chair, he threw up his arms with a frantic gesture.

“O, God!” he cried, “that I should be loitering here, seeing you, hearing you, knowing you are giving yourself to a living death! — and I, fool, coward that I am, hesitate whether to compel you to this sacrifice, or to give up my few remaining days! — Coward!” and he turned to the door.

But, anticipating his design, Evelyn sprang before him, and, falling at his feet, clung to his knees in desperation.

“Will you kill me?” she exclaimed, in agony. “Is there one sorrow so great as to see you die?” and, overwrought by this long excitement, she grew deathly pale and faint, her hold relaxed, and she sank helplessly on the floor beside him.

Mr. Chester raised her in his arms, and bathed her face and hands until she revived. Lying on his breast, listening

to his caressing words, full of remorseful tenderness, she grew self-collected and calm.

“Let me go!” she said. “The man is resolute, and we must not offend him. He is waiting for me. When he is gone, the trial will be past.”

But he held her closer to his heart. “Tempt me not, dearest,” he murmured; “for you are very precious to me, and the love of life is strong.”

“Let me go!” repeated Evelyn, in a tone so firm it sounded like a command; and, freeing herself from his arms, she pressed a kiss on his lips, and turned away.

Stanley had been hurriedly pacing the floor during the time of her absence, and, as she entered the room, he paused and remained standing until she came near.

“Have you decided?” he asked, in a quick, agitated tone.

“I have.”

“You yield at last, then?”

“To save my father from shame and death, I yield.”

“You will be my bride?”

“I will,” she answered, quietly.

“That is well,” said he; and then, after a short pause, he added, in a tone to which a sense of their relative situations gave a tinge of irony,

“Permit me to beg you to name an early day.”

A deep flush burned on her cheek, and then left it white as marble.

“I am at your mercy,” she replied, in a low tone. “It is for you to dictate to me.”

Stanley bit his lip, and said, with a confused manner, "Since you waive the lady's privilege, allow me to say that in a week a vessel leaves for England, bearing Lord Cornwallis with despatches; and, as the war seems drawing to a close, I have no doubt I can make arrangements to accompany him. This may be the best opportunity we shall have for some months, since you can be unusually well accommodated, and I shall be very glad if we can be married before the vessel leaves. Your father will of course go with us, and we will endeavor to forget, in merry England, the unfortunate incidents that have disturbed us here."

Evelyn heard him in silence. The first stroke of a keen sorrow, if it does not prostrate the frame, nerves it to greater endurance; and she was able to reply, with forced composure,

"Let it be so, then. When does the ship sail?"

"A week from to-day is the time fixed."

"Next week, then, on Wednesday morning, I await you here," she said. "Meantime I have some slight conditions to impose."

"Name them, and your wishes shall be my law," answered Stanley, and his voice was kind and respectful. He felt really grateful that she spared him a repetition of the scenes which, although they could not arouse his pity, had annoyed him excessively.

"Thank you!" said Evelyn, in the same frigid tone she had maintained throughout this strange conversation. "I desire to receive from you on that day, before the ceremony

takes place, all the papers which can in any way implicate my father."

"Certainly, you shall have them," he replied, as she paused.

"My other wish is, that from now until that time you will make no effort to see either me or my poor father. You have my promise, and surely you may trust it. If any communications are necessary, they can be made in writing."

"This also shall be as you desire," said Stanley. "Would I could convince you how much I shall hereafter strive in all things to please you!"

As he spoke, he took her hand. She drew it away, and stepped back haughtily, while a faint smile curled her lip at the mockery of such language. He perceived the repulse, and, bowing low, as he bade her good-night, abruptly withdrew.

"The girl is a tramp!" he said to himself, as he gained the street. "Although we may not be a very loving couple, I shall be proud of her. She will not annoy me with the usual weaknesses of her sex."

At that moment, his victim, in the solitude of her chamber, overcome by the reaction of that long-imposed restraint, lay writhing like a crushed worm, and moaning helplessly in her despair.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VICTORY.

COL. STANLEY was a cold-hearted and selfish man, and totally unscrupulous as to the means used to gain a desired end; but there was something in his nature which made him admire calmness and strength in others, and he had never felt such genuine regard or love for Evelyn as during the week intervening between his engagement and the time set for his marriage. Had she shrieked or fainted beneath the trial to which he had subjected her, had she wearied him with entreaties and tears, she would have excited contempt, instead of pity. But the silence with which she struggled with her feelings at first, and her calmness and self-control afterwards, aroused a deeper emotion than he thought himself capable of experiencing for any woman.

He knew that in her eyes he must appear cruel and unprincipled, and he had a wild desire to retrieve his character, and win her heart. He kept his promise not to intrude upon her personally, but found some excuse, every day, for sending messages with regard to their preparations for departure; and he could have shed tears of vexation, "albeit unused to the

melting mood," when, instead of any reply from Evelyn, he received in return only a verbal answer, or a few lines from her father. From the moment when he decided to compel her to become his wife, he had resolutely shut his eyes to all sense of wrong in the act; but he would have given up everything, except herself, to have been able to banish from her mind the recollection of the means by which her consent had been won.

While he was in this uneasy state, news came from the seat of war which entirely changed public opinion with regard to its continuance. Instead of returning to England to announce the defeat of the rebels and the dispersion of their army, Lord Cornwallis found himself obliged to proceed to Jersey, and Col. Stanley received orders to join his regiment, which was already in the field.

Of this news Evelyn and her father had heard nothing; for they neither went abroad nor received company. It had been well for the former that during these miserable days she had not been able to brood listlessly over her own sufferings. Besides the necessity of making some preparation for the voyage to England, — then something more than a ten days' excursion, — she found herself obliged to sustain and console her father, who was almost distracted at the position in which he was placed.

His isolated life, and the absence of all near ties of relationship, had served to centre all his love upon his child, between whom and himself there existed the most doting and enthusiastic affection. The one object of his existence had

been to make life bright to her, and he had fondly dreamed he could shelter her from every shade of grief. But what human love was ever sufficiently powerful and far-seeing to ward off from the beloved one the evils to which humanity is heir? Sooner or later, the clouds will gather, and the storms assail. In this dark hour, Mr. Chester saw his idol exposed to the keenest blasts of sorrow, and found himself powerless to aid. If he made any movement of defiance against the force which crushed him, he knew he should entail upon her a life-long misery; and if he accepted the sacrifice she offered to avert his doom, what bitter memories must ever haunt her of lost hopes and ruined happiness!

He sank in the struggle. In those few days he grew emaciated and bent, like one in extreme old age; and at times his eyes had a wild glare that startled Evelyn. She forced herself to calmness and cheerfulness, shutting out the memory of the past, the thought of the future, and looking hourly, momentarily, to that Almighty source whence only strength can come for these utmost exigencies of mortal need.

Yet the sacrifice was great, and the disappointment heavy. She had written Percy Grey a full account of the circumstances which placed her in the power of another; and found means to send the letter by Jem Henderson, who had taken the first opportunity to leave the city, lest he should be again arrested for his share in the prisoner's escape. She knew her lover would not blame her; that no personal regret would prevent the generous instinct of his nature from recognizing and appreciating her self-abnegation; but she shrank from the

thought of his keen and lasting grief, and feared that, in the recklessness of despair, he might throw away in battle the life which would seem to him henceforth only a weary burden.

Overpowered with these reflections whenever she was alone, Evelyn sat one afternoon in her own chamber. But one day more of freedom remained to her. She shrank, in shuddering disgust, from the fatal marriage that would so soon shut out hope forever, and make the only love her soul could know a crime. The frozen earth, ice-bound in its winter chains, the lowering sky, from whence a cold rain was slowly falling, seemed not more dreary than the life stretching out before her. And she was so young! And it is so long before a broken heart can kill!

A knock at her chamber-door aroused her, and Juniper's glossy face looked in to announce Col. Stanley's presence in the parlor below.

"I cannot see him! Where is my father? I will not see him!" she exclaimed, nervously.

"He say not tell ole massa! — on'y tell you, and gib you dis!" and Juniper held forth a card on which were pencilled these words:

"Excuse my intrusion; it was unavoidable. I have something very important to say, and I *must* see you. Do not deny me."

She paused a few moments, to remove from her face the traces of tears, and restore her neglected dress to its usual decorum. Not as a suppliant and a trembler would she appear before her persecutor. If she must yield, she would

yield coldly, proudly, and he should respect the victim who had scorned his love.

Col. Stanley sat by the fire when she entered the room, and for a moment he did not move or speak, so much was he astonished at the change in her appearance. The last time he had seen her by daylight, she was radiant in beauty, her flexible mouth wreathed in smiles, and no shade of trouble lurked in the brightness of her lustrous eyes. Now the delicate bloom of her cheek had faded, the muscles about her mouth were set in a cold and rigid expression, and over her whole face was spread a pallid and deathly hue, like that of one who struggles with a mortal disease.

She advanced slowly, and stood leaning against the high back of an arm-chair while she addressed him; for she wished thus to intimate that their interview must be brief. Her haughty, measured tone recalled his self-possession. He courteously entreated her to be seated, since he had much to say, and the aspect of the future seemed changed. Evelyn complied, for, indeed, her worn frame could ill sustain this renewed agitation; and he told her briefly of the tidings from Trenton, and that in consequence Lord Cornwallis had given up the idea of leaving the country at present. Honor compelled him, he added, after so long an idleness, to proceed at once to the field of war; and as the ship would sail with despatches, he should be obliged to spend the winter in America.

He watched Evelyn keenly during this recital, longing to know the feelings with which she listened; but the day was

dark, her chair was placed so that her face was in shadow, and, as she sat with her eyes cast down, he could detect nothing, save from the convulsive clasping of her hands, of the agony of hope, fear, and anxiety, wherewith she listened to him. If she must be wedded, there were so many reasons why she wished to leave the country; but, perhaps, these abhorred nuptials might now be deferred; and, hopeless as she was of ultimate escape, she drew a long breath at the thought of reprieve, as if a load had been lifted from her breast. But Stanley's next words crushed the rising expectation.

"You do not reply to me," said he, a little quickly, as if vexed at her silence, "and I am compelled to add, that since I must leave this evening, perhaps our marriage might take place this afternoon, and you and your father can, if you choose, go to England in the ship, as we intended. I can join you in the spring."

Evelyn uttered a faint exclamation of dismay at these words, so unforeseen and dreadful, but she recovered herself instantly.

"If you wish it," she said, gently. "Let it be as you will."

The little hands, which had been clenched so tightly together, loosened themselves and fell down by her side, and she sank back helplessly in the chair. She had resigned herself to her fate.

Stanley gazed upon her with feelings which no pen could describe.

"And what then?" said he. "Will you go to England?"

“Perhaps it will be better so,” she answered, in the same cold, quiet tone.

He sprang to his feet, and then, half kneeling, seized her hands with an impatient gesture.

“And *I!*” said he, almost fiercely, — “do you think I can live six months without you? Without you — in this savage country, which your presence alone could make tolerable! O, Evelyn,” he added, with a sudden change of manner, “why do I love you so well, when I am only hateful in your eyes?”

He turned away, and paced the room with rapid footsteps. Anger, reproaches, entreaties, he might have borne, but her dignified submission disarmed him. Of the self-sacrifice that prompted her actions he understood little; but the firmness with which she forced herself to meet what seemed inevitable he could appreciate and admire, for it was akin to his own strong will, and the inflexibility of his purposes. It would have been hard to tell which of the two were at that moment most wretched. Stanley could not bring himself to give up the power he had acquired, and yet was filled with a blind and desperate rage that its exercise obliged him to appear cruel.

A thought which occurred to him, not, indeed, for the first time, calmed his perturbation. He resolved to appear to yield — to throw himself upon her honor. This would be a band of adamant between them, and yet relieve him of some part of the odium now attached to his conduct. He paused suddenly before her, saying, gently and sorrowfully,

“Evelyn, during all this time you have not once raised your eyes to my face. Look at me—speak to me—say shall this marriage be deferred?”

She looked up with an eager expression of joy and gratitude, which gleamed over her pale face like a sudden burst of sunshine over a wintry sky.

“I see,” he continued, in a tone that moved her by its sadness, — “I see! It needs no words to tell how gladly you would escape. O, Evelyn, can I do nothing—nothing, to make you regard me kindly?”

There seemed to be almost mockery in this appeal, but Evelyn did not scorn it, for she saw the struggle he was enduring; and, after gazing at her a few moments longer, Stanley drew from his pocket a small parcel of papers, and laid them in her lap. She grasped them with an exclamation of unutterable thankfulness.

“See,” he said, “you have thought me unkind and reckless; now you shall know the power you have over me, and how completely I trust your word. These papers contain all the evidence against your father—all which could implicate or injure him. Were they destroyed, he would be safe.”

“And I may destroy them!” she cried, her face suffused with a beautiful color, and her eyes sparkling as he had never seen them before.

“On one condition they are yours, and that not a hard one,” he added, as her glance grew clouded. “I will not compel you against your will at present—I will be patient so long as patience promises the faintest hope. Evelyn, I

would give you the heart out of my bosom, but I cannot — I cannot resign you to the arms of another. Promise me, swear to me, that at some future day you will be my wife, and that you will never wed another.”

As he spoke he seized her hand and placed it upon the Bible lying on the table near. She fixed her eyes sternly upon his face.

“Upon these conditions I may destroy these papers?” she said.

“Upon these alone!” was the reply.

“I swear!” said Evelyn, solemnly. The color faded from her cheek, and the light from her eye, but her expression was not so hard, not so despairing, as before. It was much to have gained time.

He still held her hand. It was cold as ice, and passive in his throbbing, feverish grasp; but her eyes fell not beneath his gaze, and their regnant glance controlled him.

At length, she said, more kindly than she had hitherto spoken, “For so much favor, I thank you. It will be a great satisfaction to my father to have this parcel once more in his possession. As to the rest, you know you may trust me; I think I may trust you, that the vow I have taken shall not be urged upon me with indecent haste. You will never ask me for love — I will try not to hate you!”

“And is this all? Will you drive me mad with your disdain? Evelyn Chester, if I fall in the battle to which I go, may I not at least hope to be remembered with a certain pity, as of one ‘who loved not wisely, but too well’?”

The pathos of his tone might have moved her, if she could have forgotten the intense selfishness of the affection he thus urged; but now she wearied of him, and made no reply. His piercing eyes scanned her downcast face for many moments of silence, though in its cold, quiet lineaments he saw nothing of the emotion he wished to excite.

“Farewell!” he said, at length. “If I stay longer, you may exasperate me too far with your pride and your coldness. I will go while we can part in peace. We understand each other now.”

She looked up quickly, with a fierce contempt and passion in the curve of her white lip and her dilated nostrils.

“Yes,” she said, “I understand you, — perfectly!”

Stung by her scorn, maddened by the wild love that filled him, these last words were too much for his self-command. He flung from him angrily the hand he had held, but the next moment caught her in his arms, and pressed his lips upon hers.

“Thus, then, I claim you, my promised bride!” he cried, in a tone of exulting triumph, as the kiss burned through his veins like fire.

Another moment, and he was gone. She wrung her hands and clenched them in vain anger. She could have torn off the lips his touch had polluted. But none the less did she feel his power over her. His iron will, his stony heart, had won the victory. The fatal vow made her his forever, and she could not escape her doom.

A slow, feeble step, passing by the door, awakened other

thoughts. One treasure had been saved from this wreck of her young life. Her father was no longer in danger. She picked up the precious papers, which had fallen upon the floor, and, after examining them, followed him into the library.

He was sitting in his accustomed seat by the table, but his books were closed and put away, as if for many days he had not touched them; the fire smouldered beneath white ashes, and the shadows of the heavy curtains fell like a pall over the forlorn old man. He did not move from his attitude of utter dejection, or look at her as she knelt beside him; but when she unclasped his nerveless fingers and laid the parcel in his hand, he started as from an electric touch, for an inward prescience told him what they were, even before he opened them with tremulous eagerness.

“Where did you get them? Evelyn, child, speak! Are they yours? Are you saved?”

“*You* are saved, my father!” she said, and a thrill of joy ran through her pain, as she saw the sudden lighting of his face.

“They are all here;—how did you obtain them? Dear child, is there hope, is there comfort, for us yet? Has the man relented? Are you free?”

“All is as it was before, except that we may put off the evil day.”

“And what changes may not time bring?” he exclaimed, fervently.

“Nay, I am vowed to him for life; but he can no longer do you harm. You may destroy the papers, and now no

anger, or whim, or change of feeling, in him, can produce evidence against you. Be glad for me, my father — the sacrifice you mourned has not been in vain !”

She gathered the pieces, and laid them on the fire. They shot into a bright blaze, and vanished up the chimney. Mr. Chester gave a sigh, a long, long sigh of relief, and his tall figure drew itself up erect once more, as if the burden which had pressed him down was gone. Evelyn noticed the act, and her face grew calm and holy with the peace which must follow entire self-abnegation. He drew her fondly to his breast, and caressed her with low-spoken words of endearment ; and, as she listened, her sick heart seemed to forget its woe, and gather new life from the life she had given him.

“ Now, my love,” he said, at length, “ surely I can free you from any danger you have incurred. There is nothing to prove me a dangerous person, and we can leave the city without fear of being hindered by the suspicions of any one. Once in our old home, I can protect you from the designs of this bad man.”

“ But my vow ! — O, father, I could not gain your safety without, — I feared to trust it to his unfeeling heart, his capricious will, — and I vowed to marry him when he shall demand my hand.”

“ He has no honor, no truth in him ; he keeps no faith with others — let him expect none !” replied Mr. Chester, sternly.

His daughter looked at him with an anxious expression, and for a few moments hid her face in her hands.

“What is it, darling? — speak!” he said.

“O, father,” she answered, slowly, “do not tempt me with such words! If I was rash in making the vow, it must none the less be kept. Will wrong in another make my wrong right? Hope, happiness, is gone from me. I have but my truth left, and my trust in God. Shall I sacrifice these? Say, father, would it be right?”

But Mr. Chester made no reply. He drew her head down to its resting-place on his breast, and a long silence succeeded. He could not bear to utter the maxims of worldly wisdom in the ears that had been opened to heavenly teachings.

CHAPTER XII.

UNEXPECTED MEETINGS.

It was a still, gray day, the air heavy with falling snow, the earth stretched out stark and motionless beneath its wintry pall. There was no hurrying of the wind, to toy and dally with the silvery flakes, heaping them into curves and mimic flower-wreaths; no clattering crash of ice-laden branches, no whispering or whistling of the blast around the angles and windows of the old farm-house, which, with only a faint curl of smoke from its chimney to give sign of life, stood lonely and cheerless amid the frigid landscape.

The pressure of the unelastic atmosphere was felt within doors, where the family sat around the kitchen-fire. Mr. Grey nodded in his chair. His wife was silently engaged in repairing an old garment; and at her feet a slight, youthful figure bent over some sewing-work, upon which her fingers moved with a languid, abstracted air.

She was wasted and pale from recent illness, but neither this nor the quaint Quaker dress she wore, evidently fashioned from the elder lady's wardrobe, could hide the grace of her form, or mar the beauty of a face whose delicate features

were like those of a Grecian model. Her hair was only beginning to grow, after being cut so close, and the short golden curls, clustering over her brow, gave her a childish aspect; but her quiet attitude was full of thought, and there was a maturity of sorrowful experience in the listless drooping of her head, and the wistful gaze of the blue eyes, that ever seemed to be looking back into the past, or waiting and watching in a sort of anxious terror of what the future might bring.

Sitting at a little distance, with his right hand in a sling, Frank watched her now, as she pursued her monotonous employment, and wondered at the strange inner life thus only revealed; for of her wanderings and secret pain she had never spoken, and these kind protectors respected her silence. With the simple gratitude of a child she had accepted their offer of shelter, and nestled close beside the matron whose tranquil dignity covered so warm a heart; while her pleasant manner, her low voice, sweet and tremulous, and the mute appeal of her beseeching eyes, had won their affection and disarmed suspicion, until they shrank almost as much as she did from any manifestation of the curiosity that so terrified and pained her.

Yawning over his own dulness, Frank at length said, moodily, "This is stupid enough! If my tongue don't run like a mill-clapper, the silence is perfectly appalling. Speak, some of you, or I shall wish I was a bear, so I could get into a hollow tree and sleep away the winter sucking my paws. If I was n't always the luckiest fellow in the world, I should

say this lame hand was a confounded piece of ill-fortune just now. Father, mother, Agnes, say something, or I shall have the blues before I know it!"

"Has thee never heard, 'silence is golden'?" said Mrs. Grey, smiling.

"Yes; but 'speech is silver,' and that's the handiest for common currency."

"You might make a little fortin', now, by hiring yourself out to do the talkin' for somebody. A slow-mouthed man would pay you somethin' handsome to do his'n," said Mr. Grey.

"That speculation might pay," replied Frank, "if the horses had n't been stolen and the barn burnt down. But you see, the silver now-a-days is all paper-money, at about five shillings a ton; and I should make so much, I should have nowhere to put it, and nothing to haul it there with."

"You can laugh, if you 're a mind to," rejoined his father, "but it's kind o' awful to think what the country is a comin' to. I never see sich times afore in *this* world, I tell you. It seems mostly as if it 't wan't no use keepin' up the war no longer."

"If you think that, you ought to have seen our soldiers in the retreat over the Passaic, the day I got wounded. A good many of 'em with fingers so frozen they could n't handle a musket, and the blood from their bare feet tracking the ground as they marched; and yet—zounds! (that an't swearing, mother)—do you suppose one of us would have turned our back on the enemy, if retreating had n't just then

been the only way to conquer. We'll give it to 'em yet — the rascal red-coats!"

He rose from the lounge, in his excitement, and his handsome face kindled and flushed with eagerness.

"Yet you told us some on 'em wanted to desert," said his father.

"None but the short-term militia. All of us that consider ourselves in for the war are above such trifles as being frozen and starved to death. Gunpowder and lead may finish us, but nothing else will!" replied Frank, with a laugh of defiance.

"There 's nothin' like spunk — nothin' in *this* world; but, arter all, it takes somethin' better 'n spunk to keep a man straight, through sich trials as you tell of," said Mr. Grey, thoughtfully; and then, as he glanced out of the window, he added, with sudden animation, "Look there, — who 's that comin' down the hill? Bless my soul, it's Percy! What on airth brings him home now?"

The family crowded around the door, in some anxiety, as the new comer entered.

"Thee 's well? Thee is n't wounded, Percy?" asked his mother, as his manly face was bent down to hers.

"Well — and happy," he answered, as a quick glance of sympathy and confidence passed between them.

"But how came you here, then?" interposed Frank. "Was the General anxious for my health, and sent you to inquire? Thank you, I'm convalescent. Or, was you afraid of getting the gout with the high living at head-quarters, and

so came to try our fine salt P's for a few days? Or, lastly, did you desert?"

"Yes; from New York."

"From New York!" they exclaimed simultaneously, and then followed a multitude of questions, in reply to which he gave a detailed account of his captivity and escape, together with his previous journey to Washington's camp on the Delaware.

"I inquired for you there," he said to his brother, "and heard you had been wounded. How did it happen?"

"It was in a skirmish the day we crossed the Passaic. The wound is nothing, if it were not in my right hand; but, as I was useless afterwards, I thought I'd come home, for a one-handed Jack might be of some service in a lonesome place like this."

There was a touch of impatience and depression in his tone, showing how his proud young spirit chafed at the inaction to which he was condemned; but the expression of these feelings passed from his face as his glance wandered involuntarily to the low seat where Agnes, a little apart, and half forgotten, had listened silently to their protracted conversation. Her work had fallen to the floor, and her head leaned heavily on her hand. So deep was her revery that she hardly seemed to breathe.

"Agnes, you have n't spoken a word since Percy came. What are you thinking about?" he asked, abruptly.

She started, with a frightened air, and half turned from

him, pressing her hand upon her heart, as if she feared his eyes might see its hidden workings.

Mr. Grey noticed the action, and, moving his chair nearer, laid his hand upon her head. "Poor cretur! how narvous you be!" he said, tenderly.

"O, no! I was tired — I had forgotten where I was," she answered quickly, and seized her work with a confused manner.

Mrs. Grey drew it from her hands, and, folding it up, laid it in the capacious work-basket by her side.

"Thee's done enough sewing for to-day, my child," she said, quietly; and her husband added, "There, darter — there, lay your head on my knee. I know you must be tired."

As he spoke, his large hand, brown and hardened by years of toil, with a touch gentle as a mother's drew her head to the proffered resting-place. She yielded, with a delicious sense of comfort, to the protecting caress; for a moment the darkness of past years rolled away, and the light of that sacred hearth-fire gleamed warm over her soul.

"You'll get stronger by the time spring comes, least-ways I hope so," continued Mr. Grey. "It's bad to be so sick and weak like, an't it, now?"

She looked up shyly, while a smile brightened her eyes, and curved her pale lips, as she said, "O, no, it is not hard to be sick — it is so pleasant to be taken care of!"

"You think so, darter? S'pose you can have the care with-

out the sickness, — won't that do just as well? I tell you, this is a horrid hard world, any way, and when a body comes to be sick, it does make it bad — master!"

A sort of shudder thrilled over Agnes' whole frame, and, unconsciously, in a low tone, she repeated,

"A hard world! O, yes, a dreadful, dreadful world!"

The group around the fire looked at each other a moment in silence, for the pathos of her voice was irresistible. Then, bending towards her, Frank said, impulsively,

"Cannot we help you? Agnes, you have never told us one word about your troubles, or sufferings. You have been here four months. Cannot you trust us yet?"

The girl sprang to her feet with a faint cry, half of defiance and half of fear. She saw the kind eyes fixed upon her with far more of pity than of curiosity, she remembered all she owed to the family who had sheltered her, and her bosom heaved with a mighty gush of gratitude and love.

"Some time I will tell you all, but not here — not thus — not now. Indeed, I cannot now!" she said, humbly, in a stifled voice, and glided like a shadow from the room.

"Is this true? Have you learned nothing of her history?" asked Percy, in astonishment, when the door had closed.

"Nothing — not a word," said his father. "Somehow I could n't ever make up my mind to ask sich a little delicate cretur anything she did n't want to tell; and if I ever tried to, she looked at me so out o' them great eyes o' her'n, that I shut up in a minute, mum as a beetle. Marm an t done no better, though I thought, maybe, bein' a woman, she might."

“I never felt moved to ask her,” said Mrs. Grey, in answer to her son’s inquiring look.

“And yet the world is agreed that woman is a synonyme for curiosity,” said Percy, half laughing. “Who would have believed this? Mother, I always knew you were more perfect than ordinary mortals, and now you have proved you are no descendant of Eve.”

“It was a great mistake not putting her in the garden of Eden, instead of that heedless young lady who liked apples so well,” added Frank. “What trouble it would have saved the world! When the serpent came hopping up to her on the tip of his tail, and made a most persuasive curve to offer to escort her to the tree, she would have put on her most dignified manner, and said, ‘No, I thank thee. There’s no occasion.’ I can see just how she’d do it.”

“Hush, Frank!” said his mother, smiling, with a faint blush. “I am free to own that I am curious in this matter; but, as father says, her eyes have great power, and, gentle as she is, and soft in tone and manner, she maintains her reserve as well as those who seem better able to do so. I could not ask what I knew she did not wish to tell.”

“Her apparent helplessness and her childish air is a strong appeal to your forbearance, and perhaps she is aware of it,” said Percy, thoughtfully.

“Do you mean to say it is assumed for a purpose?” retorted Frank, in an angry tone. “She is as guileless as an infant, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for doubting her!”

“My dear boy, did I say I doubted her?” replied Percy, in surprise.

“Your words implied it.”

“And what if they did? May I not say what I think? Why are you so offended?”

“She is a stranger, and has no friends, and it is unmanly and cruel to suspect her,” answered Frank, and then suddenly left the room, as if ashamed of the irritation he had betrayed. The old farmer opened his eyes wide, and, with an emphatic whistle, looked at his wife, saying,

“Why, mother, is that the way the land lays?”

“I never dreamed of it before,” she answered, “and even now am inclined to think it was only the pain of his wound which made him speak so. It is a bad wound, Percy, and will take a long time to heal, though he won’t allow me to tell him so.”

“Poor Frank! But this, mother, will be worse than any gun-shot wound, if we don’t have a care of it. I don’t want to judge Agnes harshly, but I must say it is strange, if she has been *only* unfortunate, that she is not willing to confide in you, after all your kindness to her. It would be a pity for Frank to become entangled thus. We ought to know something of her history.”

Percy spoke slowly, thinking less, at that moment, of his brother and Agnes, than of the fact that Frank’s wife must be a companion and friend to the pure and peerless Evelyn Chester. Happiness oftener, perhaps, than misery, inclines man to selfishness. There was a slight pause, and then Mrs.

Grey's quiet tones aroused him from the slight reverie into which he had fallen.

“ ‘Charity thinketh no evil,’ ” she said.

“ I do not deserve that reproof,” he answered, quickly, “ for my advice was but the suggestion of common prudence. But you are so secluded here, that things do not seem to you as to one who has mingled with the world.”

“ Thee says truly, my son,” she replied, “ but there is an inward light which shines brightest outside the circle thee calls the world. Those who follow it seldom find themselves bewildered.”

“ If intuitions may ever be trusted, surely you can rely upon yours,” said Percy, looking fondly at his mother.

“ In this case I think I may, without fear. I can imagine many reasons for Agnes' silence besides the one at which thee hinted. She has doubtless met with so much harshness and coldness before she came here, that she fears to tell a story which she has no means of substantiating. Be that as it may, I shall not seek to compel confidence, if I am unable to win it, and surely thee can trust thy brother's honor and discretion. Frank will do no wrong to his family.”

“ Well, now, I tell you,” said Mr. Grey, “ the gal is a good gal, you may depend upon it, Percy. Sich a face as her'n don't cover a bad heart. Bless her soul! she 's innocent as a baby, and I love her most like she was one o' my own that 's layin' cold and dead this many a year under the apple-trees.”

Mrs. Grey arose, and, putting away her work, began to make preparations for tea; and Agnes, hearing these culinary

sounds, returned to the kitchen. Her eyes bore traces of tears, and her movements were nervous and tremulous; but, as he watched her graceful form passing to and fro through the room in eager helpfulness, and the quick play of her features as varying emotions swept over them, Percy ceased to wonder at the charm which had wrought so powerfully on the other members of the household.

For Agnes was not always abstracted and sad. Sometimes from a desire to divert the attention and pity she had attracted by moments of gloom, sometimes from the irrepressible up-bounding of a youthful nature originally joyous as a bird's, she had hours of cheerfulness and gentle gayety. This evening, lest she should damp the pleasure of the family circle, she exerted herself to talk and to listen with interest. Smiles hovered around her lips, and her low, silvery laugh joined the mirth occasioned by Frank's witticisms. But when, at the prayer with which this Christian farmer always closed the day, Mr. Grey besought, with more than usual fervor, for a blessing upon "the stranger within their gate," he who had joined most heartily in the petition heard with yearning sympathy the low sigh breaking from her lips, and the faintly-breathed exclamation, "O, bless me — pity me — let me die!"

When all the others had retired, Percy and his mother remained a long time sitting in quiet converse before the embers. The flickering light shone over them, and revealed their faces fitfully to each other. Candles were luxuries too expensive to be allowed when they could be dispensed with, but Percy was rather glad than sorry for this poverty

now. The snow-storm had changed to rain, which fell in heavy showers, filling up the pauses of talk with its dull monotone; and, with such an accompaniment, and the favoring gloom of the shadows filling the room, he could unfold all his past fears and his present hopes to the true maternal heart that throbbled with a love so pure and deep.

With the first beams of morning Percy awoke. He was impatient to pursue his way to the camp, and when he descended the stairs was glad to find breakfast nearly ready. Having eaten it in some haste, and put on the warm garments which were rendered necessary by a freezing change in the weather, he bade a cheerful good-by to home, and, with his brother, who signified his intention of accompanying him a short distance, set out on the journey. They had walked only two or three miles, when, upon reaching the brow of a hill overlooking an extent of level country, they heard a faint reverberation, which caused them simultaneously to stop and listen. In a few moments it came again, louder than before.

"It is — it is cannon firing!" exclaimed Percy. "They are surely fighting! O, if I were only there! What would n't I give at this moment for wings?"

"Wings! you could n't fly, if you had them. Why don't you wish for something more reasonable? A horse, now, would be worth a dozen pair of wings."

"My kingdom for a horse!" replied Percy, laughing. "But I don't see as I am much more likely to get this wish than the other."

"Perhaps you won't," said Frank; "but, if I wanted it,

there 'd be fifty chances to beg, borrow, or steal one, before I was an hour older. It's my luck. I always get what I want."

"You 'd better set yourself resolutely to wish for one on my account, then. O, if I were but there! To think that I should have consumed a week in escaping from New York, — and now I shall lose this battle!"

It was not often that Percy manifested his emotions or desires by words, and Frank heard with surprise these expressions of impatience.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, "if you want a horse so much, you shall have one. Trust my luck! we 'll find one before long."

Even while he was speaking, as if to verify his confidence in fortune, from a cross-road they were approaching came the rumbling of wheels, and the sound of boyish voices singing a ballad just then in fashion among the Tories of Jersey. The verse which the brothers heard, as they came nearer, was as follows :

"When Congress sent great Washington,
 All clothed with power and breeches,
 To meet old Britain's warlike sons,
 And make some rebel speeches,

"Full many a child went into camp
 All dressed in homespun kersey,
 To see the greatest rebel scamp
 That ever crossed o'er Jersey."

"Hallo, there, you young rascals! — stop that!" shouted

Frank, as the team came from behind the trees. The singer obeyed in some trepidation, as he saw the two men placing themselves so as to hinder his further progress.

He was a lad of about twelve years, accompanied by one still younger, who nestled in a load of hay, drawn by two stout horses. The elder boy held the reins, and, though considerably alarmed at the unceremonious strangers, continued to urge the animals forward with voice and whip. Percy had seized one of them by the head, and was holding him firmly, thinking what bargain he should make to obtain him, when Frank exclaimed,

“My luck against the world! This is our very old John, that fell into the snare of the wicked, and was taken by the Britishers the day our house was ransacked! Take him out of the traces, Percy, and away with you!”

It was even as he said, and the horse gave unmistakable signs of joy at recognizing his young masters. In another moment his harness was off, a piece of the reins taken for a bridle, a strip of woollen cloth they found under his collar was strapped around for a saddle, and Percy, delighted beyond measure, sprang upon his back.

“There, now! an’t I as good as a fairy godmother? Is there anything else you ’d like? You’ve only to speak, you know. I would n’t have you think my capacity is only of one horse power!” said Frank, gleefully.

Percy laughed, and shook his head. “Moderation is a virtue at all times — and so, good-by. If I get more than my share of glory, I’ll give you half!”

All this had passed in a few moments, and the boys were too much bewildered to interfere. But, now comprehending their loss, they began to whimper.

“Pa ’ll gin it to you! — Pa and uncle is just behind, and they ’ll gin it to you two fellers, if you run off with our hoss!”

“It happens to be our own,” said Frank, as Percy galloped away, “and I ’m going to have *you* two ‘fellers’ hung for horse-stealing!”

“T an’t your’n, nuther!” retorted the boy, looking frightened. “Pa bought it of a sojer, more ’n two months ago, down to Brunswick; and you jest wait and see what he ’ll do to you when he gets here — pa and uncle! Won’t they pitch into you? You won’t know nothin’ where you be! You just wait!”

“Thank you, my young friend,” replied Frank, taking off his hat, with mock gravity. “No doubt patience is commendable, and so are prudence, and perseverance, and patriotism, and perfection, and several other things that begin with the same letter; but I think, if you tell the truth about your respected ‘pa,’ pedestrianism would become me better than patience, and I shall wait no longer. Present my compliments, if you please, and say the horse could n’t have been sent home at a better time, and we ’ll send in our bill for the use of him two months.”

“Pa ’ll gin it to you — you mister!” said the boy, from the top of the hay-cart, a little awed by such an unusual address. “I hear him a comin’ now, and he ’ll gin it to you,

a takin' away our hoss! Pa, hurry! here 's a feller a stealin' our hoss!"

Frank sprang lightly up the hill, and when he was out of sight turned into a by-path leading through the woods to a spring much used by the teamsters familiar with that locality.

From thence, stepping on bare logs and patches of frozen ground, that his footsteps might not be traced by the vindictive "pa," who he doubted not was in hot pursuit, he gained the thick forest, and, directing his course by the sun, came at length into a narrow valley, about a mile from his father's house.

Following this to its termination, he found himself in a hollow or depression among the hills, nearly circular, and containing a small pool. This was now covered with thin blue ice, except in one spot where the living springs that fed it poured out their surplus of water in a stream that ran a little way, and was soon lost beneath the snow. Over this opening a willow threw its pendulous branches, and a few evergreens reared their dark spires beside it; but the remainder of the basin was destitute of trees, although the growth on the surrounding elevation was thicker than usual. In a line from the copse, a path might be traced to a low hut half-way up the hill opposite to where Frank stood; and as he hesitated whether to pursue his way homeward, or to stop for a few moments' chat with its inmates, the curtain which served for a door was withdrawn, and Lawontica came out, bearing in her hand an earthen pitcher she wished to fill at the spring.

In arranging her dress, she had modified the national

costume with some ideas derived from her white neighbors, and the effect was highly picturesque. She wore a jacket, shaped much like the modern basque, made of red cloth, with close sleeves, trimmed around with the soft fur of the silver-gray fox, and ornamented on the breast by a large, oval silver plate, that served as a fastening. From beneath this a skirt of dark cloth came down nearly to her ankles, leaving visible leggins also trimmed with fur, and well-shaped feet covered with embroidered moccasins. Around her bare throat were strings of bright-colored beads, and on her head was placed jauntily a conical cap of wolf-skin, adorned by a knot of gay plumes. Her abundant hair, black and glossy as jet, fell loosely around her ears, partly shading the cheeks, and was gathered behind in a braid, or queue, tied with broad, scarlet trimming.

She came forward, not with her usual swift, springing step, but thoughtfully, and at a lagging pace, as if her thoughts were little in accordance with the brilliant sunshine, and the clear, bracing air. She had not been at the farm-house for some days, and Frank, fearing she might have been ill, was about to join her and make inquiries, when he perceived some one moving from behind the willow as she entered the copse. Curious to know who it was, he stood still to see a short pantomime that interested him greatly.

Lawontica, apparently unconscious of observation, had reached the willow, when a tall Indian, completely tricked out in savage finery, came forward, and, half kneeling, laid at her feet a bundle of choice furs tied between the branching

antlers of a deer. The girl, who was doubtless not wholly taken by surprise, without the slightest start or exclamation, pushed them scornfully aside with the point of her moccasin, and stepped by them with regal hauteur, without deigning a glance at the suppliant. But he stretched out one arm to detain her, and, raising the other in a beseeching gesture, spoke a few words in their native tongue. She did not change her attitude, a little in advance and half turned from him, but Frank saw her lips move in reply.

Again there was a supplicating motion, and the skins were placed before her. She paused a moment, and then set one foot lightly on them. Her companion was evidently gratified even at this disdainful reception of his offering. Claspings his hands and spreading them out again, pointing now to Sanoso's hut, and now to the forest before them, he seemed entreating her to grant some boon, which she for a long time refused, with slight gestures of vexation. Yet still she listened, with her head a little bent, her eyes cast down, one hand raised, and the fore-finger pressed against her lips, while the other, holding the pitcher carelessly, hung straight by her side, and her foot rested more firmly on the bundle of skins. The grace and the intense expression of her figure would have charmed a sculptor.

After a time, the Indian seemed to weary of his useless prayer and, rising to his feet, leaned against the tree with folded arms, and an air both sorrowful and angry. Then, for the first time, she turned towards him. Frank could no longer see her face, but she seemed to talk, and he to listen

and reply with an expression of surprise or perplexity, not unmingled with eager hope and joy. The dialogue was short. Lawontica pointed to the forest and waved her hand, as if to bid him leave her; and, after a few more words, he obeyed.

She watched him, as he moved away with a firm and rapid footstep, and when he had disappeared turned again to the spring, and, having filled her pitcher, set it down on the mossy roots of the tree. Frank was approaching, when something in her attitude arrested him. He was now near enough to see the expression of her features; but, excited and self-absorbed, she had neither seen nor heard him.

Supposing herself alone, she stood for a moment, her face contracted as if in a spasm of pain, and her hands clenched and buried in the hair which hung over her temples. Then, suddenly giving her lover's present a kick more vigorous than graceful, she threw herself down upon a bank of turf which the snow had left bare under the willow, with a violence that must have caused serious injury to one less hardy, and lay motionless, except that her frame heaved and quivered, as if she were weeping convulsively.

Divided between curiosity and sympathy, Frank was debating whether to withdraw unobserved, or to make her aware of his presence and offer his aid in her trouble, when she arose to a sitting posture, and, with her elbows on her knees, and one hand supporting her chin, remained quiet, looking moodily into the water at her feet. Her cap had fallen off, her dress was soiled and disarranged, and her features were

so full of gloom and despair, that her friend could no longer forbear an attempt to ascertain its cause.

She heard his step, and looked up; but, perceiving him, resumed her former attitude, shading her face with both hands, and shaking the heavy locks of hair over her brow, so that her expression was hidden from view.

“What can be the matter with you, Lawontica?” he said. “How you look! You really frighten me. What has happened to you?”

She made no answer, and he came nearer, laying his hand on her shoulder, and bending down so that he could hear the few words she muttered to herself.

“What is the matter?” he repeated. “I have n’t seen you for more than a week. Where have you been? Tell me what this great trouble is. Perhaps I can help you. Poor girl! how you have been crying!”

She moved impatiently at his touch, and he heard a suppressed sob tremble and die away in her throat; but when he reiterated his inquiry in a tone even more anxious than before, she jerked her shoulder petulantly from beneath his hand, and, looking up, uttered some Indian words in an angry tone. Then rising to her feet, she put back her dishevelled tresses, and, replacing her cap, seized the pitcher, as if about to return to the hut. He thought she was offended at him for intruding upon her at an unguarded moment, and said, in a tone of apology,

“Perhaps I should not have spoken to you just now, but

you seemed to be in so much trouble I could n't help it. Let me carry the water for you!"

He offered to take it, but she dashed it to the ground between them; her cheeks glowed, her limbs quivered, her eyes seemed really to flash with rage.

"*Jigullahsy! jigullahsy noogoo!*"* she screamed, stamping her foot. "You come here too much—too much! Very much you make Indian girl fool!"

In utter amazement, Frank ejaculated, "What do you mean, Lawontica? What have I done?"

But she replied again in her native dialect, as if sensible her imperfect English could but poorly express the emotions that convulsed her. Frank could not follow her rapid utterance, and, desirous to soothe her, refilled the pitcher, and said, cheerfully,

"Come, let's go see Sanoso! I am sorry I offended you, but you know I did n't mean to do it. Let us be friends again!"

"No, no, never!" she said, fiercely. "White mans and Indian no be friends—never! Never white mans mean any good to Indian girl!"

"Why, Lawontica, this is beyond all reason! You know better! What has made you so angry? You always used to like me."

"No like you any more—hate you—hate you!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of defiance, and walked swiftly away. He was about to follow, when old Sanoso entered the

* Away with you!—away with you, this moment!

copse. She regarded him with a curious, peering gaze, and then, with a sigh, looked after her grandchild. He could not tell whether she had been witness of their interview, but saw that she was anxious and troubled. She would have taken from him the burden Lawontica had forgotten, but he said,

“Let me take it to the wigwam for you, and here is a bundle of skins I will take with it. An Indian brought them to Lawontica, and she has been having a terrible time here since. She is angry with me about something. What is it?”

“*Ahkie!* O, me!” said the old woman, with a low groan. “Always same thing when folks young man, young woman. White man, Indian—all same thing! Sanoso no want ’um you carry these. Me take um ’lone to wigwam. Maybe, *pappoose** no want ’um you come there any more.”

“You certainly won’t banish me—*me*, that you have known ever since I was a boy! You won’t tell me I must not come here again!” said Frank, more and more surprised and perplexed.

Sanoso seemed confused, but persisted in refusing to allow him to help her, and, in reply to his questions, kept repeating,

“Some time, maybe, me tell ’um you. Now you go. You mother, ve’y much he† wonder you an’t gone quick!”

He had no choice but to obey her, and reluctantly pursued his way homeward, cogitating with much solicitude over the events of the morning.

* The child.

† The Indian seldom used the feminine pronoun.

CHAPTER XIII.

“MANY A SLIP 'TWINX CUP AND LIP.”

THE sound of cannon, an echo of which had reached Percy Grey upon the hill-top, proceeded from the battle of Trenton, at that hour in progress. Every one remembers the brilliant counter-stroke, by which, when all seemed lost, and Cornwallis vaunted over his wine of having “bagged the fox,” Washington extricated his army from impending destruction, and forced the enemy to retire.

Stimulated by joy at his unexpected prize, and eager to reach the scene of action, Percy urged the horse forward at his fastest pace. The rain of the previous night had washed away the snow, and a succeeding change of temperature had frozen the roads solid as iron, so they were in fine order for travel; and, guided by inquiries, and by a soldier's instinct, he pursued the most direct route, and came to Stony Brook just as the army had crossed it, and were proceeding to break down the bridge. A few words of explanation from his brother-officers assured him they were retiring from a victory, and not from a defeat; and, with new confidence and hope,

they pushed on toward Pluckemin, where it had been determined to halt for the night.

The men had fought like heroes, but never were mortals more footsore and exhausted than they who that evening thronged the houses of this small village. Many of them, too weary to wait for food, asked only a place to rest, and regain the sleep they had lost through three toilsome nights. Others, rejoiced at the unaccustomed luxuries of shelter, warmth, and a plentiful supper, lingered around the firesides where they had been made welcome, alternately talking and sleeping.

Gen. Washington was himself nearly worn out with the long tension of anxiety and excitement through which he had passed, but did not rest until he had personally inspected the condition of the wounded, and been assured that his well-trying troops were made comfortable. Then he rejoined his staff at a house where they had found lodging. It was near a tavern, where other officers, and many of the soldiers, were crowded in small but decent apartments.

Percy joined this party, and, after a homely and jovial supper, in which the hostess of the inn expended all her skill, they retired early to their closely-packed dormitory. Percy had not endured the fatigue that made his comrades sleep so soundly, and he was awakened long before daylight by visions of one far away. He listened a while to the nasal chorus around him, and then arose to seek the fresh air outside the house.

He groped his way down stairs to the kitchen, and pushed open the door. The soldiers lay in various positions all over

the floor, and around the fireplace opposite a group were sitting half asleep over the dying embers. An awkward-looking youth, with cheeks distended, and mouth close to the ashes, was trying to puff into greater activity a little flame that flickered up the chimney, but scarcely lighted its cavernous depths. Bottles and mugs that stood on a table near showed how they had been consoling themselves for former privations.

“Yes, I did; I fired the six-pounder, and brought 'em all to a halt — I did!” said the youth, intermitting his efforts, and looking up, as if in reply to something which had been said by a man who sat in the corner near.

“You did? — Likely story that is!” said the person addressed, in an incredulous tone.

“Yes, I did!” replied his companion. “I was comin' 'long, skulkin' behind the trees, so as to keep out o' the shot, an' I see 'em comin', an', thinks I, them Britishers 'll catch 'em, arter all. Then I sees the gun you left there, an' I happens to think what a fust-rate chance 't would be to pepper 'em unexpected-like, when they was n't lookin', an' so I touched her off. My eyes! did n't she speak? How I laughed when I see 'em halt an' send a man to look an' see who was there! Reckon they thought now Gin'ral Washington and all the Yankees was firing off that 'ere cannon. I jest laid and laughed to think 't wan't nobody but me. The feller did n't come near enough to see me, an' I don't believe he 'll know to his dyin' day who fired off that 'ere cannon.”

He resumed his blowing, and his listener took a long drink

at a leather bottle he had been holding beneath his nose, as if to regale one sense with the smell, before he tickled the other with the taste. Then, smacking his lips heartily, he ejaculated,

“ Well, you ’re a pretty green one, to put a whole regiment to flight the first shot you fire ; but, if your story ’s true, you ought to be promoted ; for, if they ’d come up with us, I don’t know how we could have fought ’em. We ’d used ourselves up, and there was n’t any fight left in us. Come, boy, let ’s have a song. If you ’re going to be a soldier, you must learn to sing ; ” and, with a clear, musical voice, he trolled forth,

“ We came, we fought, but could not beat,
 And so we sounded a retreat ;
 On Roxbury Hill again we saw em,
 An’ did like old Nick clapper-claw ’em.
 Tirra, lirra, la !

“ But warlike casuists can’t agree,
 If we beat them, or they beat we.
 We swear we beat, they swear we lie,
 We ’ll tell you more on ’t by and by.
 Tirra, lirra, la ! ”

“ Hold your noise, can’t you ? ” growled one of the sleepy ones, with an oath, as the singer was about repeating the strain.

“ Why, man, you ’ve no ear for music, and this is music and philosophy combined. There is a moral to it. It is the two sides of the shield. It shows the difference it makes how you look at a thing ; — it shows — ”

‘ It ’ll show you how to swallow your teeth when they ’re

knocked down your throat, if you don't shut your mouth!" interrupted his antagonist, half rising.

"O, now, don't!" said the singer, with unruffled good temper. "Did n't you never learn, when you was a little 'un, that 'you should never let your angry passions rise'? Well, there, now, don't be mad! Suppose you are sleepy; and maybe I shall be too, to-morrow, if I don't turn in. Make room for me, there, and I'll lay down; and, boy, you wake me when I get thirsty."

"How shall I know when you're thirsty?" asked the boy.

"O, I shall be thirsty whenever you wake me," was the reply; and, still hugging his bottle, the merry-hearted and bibacious soldier composed himself to quiet.

Major Grey had been an amused witness of this little episode as he stood by the door; but when he approached the fire, stepping carefully over the sleepers, he started with surprise as the boy turned to him, and said,

"Here's a warm corner, stranger, if you're cold. They let the fire all go out, and I'm nigh-about froze, for them ere pine planks an't so warm as one o' marm's feather-beds. Good enough for me, too, marm would say, — goin' off fightin' agin my lawful king."

"Jem Henderson! Surely, I am not mistaken? You are right welcome here," said Percy, grasping his hand.

"La, now! — I declare if 't an't the major, safe and sound!" was the reply. "Do tell, now, how you got on arter you left me."

"It's rather a long story, but you shall have it some time.

Tell me first if you suffered any for your share in my escape, and if Mr. Chester's part in it was suspected."

"Not a mite! An' the joke was, that when they took me up and set out to haul me over the coals, the old 'squire came for'ard and give me a character. My eyes! — did n't I laugh in my sleeves? They never suspected nothin', and all they did to me was jest to turn me out o' that infernal jail, — and they could n't hurt my feelin's that way."

"I am quite relieved to hear it. And they are quite well, are they — Mr. Chester and his daughter? Did they know you were coming here?"

At this question there was a change in Jem's appearance, perceptible even in the dim firelight which alone relieved the darkness of the room. The broad grin of delight gave place to an expression of gloom, and he wrung his hand away from his questioner's friendly grasp so quickly, that, in alarm, he added,

"What is it? What has happened to them? Are they in any trouble? Have you any message for me?"

"My eyes!" said Jem, gruffly, "you ask a feller fifty questions, and then get scared 'cause he don't answer 'em all to onc't. I left 'em well enough, last time I see 'em. Marm got so scared about me, that I could n't stand it, nohow; and so I stole off, a day or two arter I was released, and left New York behind me. I was down to Millstone Creek, yesterday, and see the fightin', — pretty fightin' 't was, too. I fired a cannon, too, right at the Britishers. I could n't help thinkin' what marm would say, if she knew it. Poor marm! how she

must a took on when she knew I was gone! Was n't I glad, though, when I saw somebody put a shot through *one* cocked hat?"

"Whose was it?" asked Major Grey, secretly uneasy at this evident avoidance of the subject in which his companion knew he was most interested.

"Somebody that's lived too long already for the good of his soul. 'T would be what I call a piece o' Christian charity to put him down there where they don't have cold weather no time o' year."

"Come, let us take a walk," said Percy, abruptly, seeing their conversation was attracting attention. "It will soon be morning, and there is light enough now to show us our way. We cannot talk freely here, and I must have the news from New York."

"You go to walk, if you need exercise; I've stretched my legs enough, these last two days," retorted Jem. "I'll stay here, and keep the fire warm. Don't you be in a hurry about the news. Folks don't always know what they're doin' when they ask for news."

"If you have any letter, or any message, give it to me at once," said Percy, speaking authoritatively, in a low, anxious tone. The boy, after fumbling in his pockets, drew forth a package carefully enveloped in paper, and, opening it, gave him Evelyn's letter.

Percy took it and went out, without any more questions. Impatient as he had been a moment before, he was now half glad that in the uncertain twilight of morning he could not

trace its delicate lines. He wished for time to face this change, to meet this apprehended sorrow ; and, if the hope he had cherished must be wrenched from his heart, he would pause yet once more to realize its blessedness, — to recall every tone, and look, and gesture, of their last brief interview ; to remember that, whatever unknown trouble the folded sheet contained, it was a message from the lady of his love. Her hands had touched it ; her soul had been breathed into it ; her tears, perchance, had fallen over it. Beneath the very stroke of doom he lingered to seize the deliciousness of this thought. It came of his perfect trust in her, of his noble reliance upon her truth. Whatever he was doomed to bear arose from the pressure of external circumstances. And was it in the power of fate now to force them asunder ? Could not those two strong young spirits control the course of destiny, and shape their own path through life ?

Thinking such thoughts as these, he became cheerful and courageous. As he walked rapidly along, braced by the keen morning air, he clenched his hands nervously, and laughed aloud in his exuberant self-reliance. Nearly a mile from the village a high hill overlooked the valley, and thither his steps had been unconsciously directed. Upon its summit a grove of fir-trees threw the gloom of their black shadows over the snow, now flushed and ruddy from the reflection of the brightening east. Just without their circle he rested, and, turning wilfully from them, gazed upon the surrounding landscape, and forced himself to observe its beauty. The letter, which he had thrust unopened into his vest, still lay next his heart,

and there was a magnetism about it that diffused a subtle warmth over his whole frame.

An icy mist the previous evening had turned into a scene of enchantment all the homely hill-sides, with their stunted groves, and the bushes in the clearings, and the low farm-houses, and the long reaches of unbroken forest sweeping on to the horizon. In the amber light of that early hour, each near twig and bough glistened and scintillated from the thousand tiny points of its crystallized sheathing, while the fir-trees hung out their fleecy banners to catch the radiance streaming towards them from between bars of crimson cloud, and when the breeze touched them showered down their treasures in light wreaths, which the golden rays permeated and colored, until it seemed as if those stalwart children of earth were casting jewels upon her snow-covered grave.

While Percy Grey surveyed the scene with fascinated eyes, the sun burst through the portals of the morning, changing the roseate clouds into a transparent glory of purple and amber, and darting beams of fire far down the valley. A small stream, half hidden by its crest of ice, wound sluggishly through the hamlet, from whence a thin vapor had been rising, twirling in the fitful wind, waving and oscillating as it mounted upward, until it caught the sunshine; and then, with a thrill through all its depths, it flushed into opaline hues, and, rolling itself together in fleecy folds, soared away to the sky.

Standing amid that primal splendor, breathing that vivify-

ing air, who could succumb to evil? who could believe in gloom or care?

He opened the letter, and read.

Instinctively he had retreated within the fir-grove, and sat down beneath its shadow. The paper dropped from his hands, and, bowing his head forward until his face was hidden, he remained mute, motionless, and cold. His courage, his hope, his strength, what were they against this fearful wrong?

Lost, lost to him forever,—vanished from the sphere of his life,—these anguished breathings of her soul the last recognition of the tie that bound her to him! Yet it was not chiefly of himself or his own loss he thought. If she had been happy, he might have learned to be content. But what a life was before her! He could almost pray that the Atlantic, upon whose billows he supposed her at that moment to be tossing, might bury within its quiet depths the care-worn heart that could never again know peace.

Over the gleaming sky a film of cloud had spread, thickening and lowering ominously; and now a low, shivering wail came from the fir-trees as the rising gusts of wind struck through them, and on his bent form the snow-flakes came down like ashes, white and dead.

He lifted up his face at the chilling touch, and gave one glance around him. Where was the brightness he had seen? Where was the hope that had lit his life? Had they not perished together in a moment? Would they ever return?

Holding his cloak about him, he descended the hill. His face was colorless, but his step was firm. His love had been

unspoken and unknown to his companions ; his suffering must be equally silent and unshared.

Within the village the drum and fife sent forth their stirring summons, and the companies were forming. As he descended the hill Percy was an involuntary witness of one of those painful scenes inseparable from a conflict partaking so much the nature of a civil war. From a small cottage by the roadside came the sound of voices raised in entreaty and expostulation ; and as he passed, the door was flung violently open, and a young man stood in the doorway struggling to retain his position, as if some one had forced him out. An aged woman was wringing her hands and weeping, while her husband, whose white hairs shamed his unnatural rage, shook his fist at his son, with taunts and reproaches.

As Percy paused an instant, he heard him say, sternly,

“Go, and never show your face here again! — Rebel! — traitor to your country and your king! — begone, begone!”

At this moment the mother sprang forward, and, throwing her arms around her son’s neck, sobbed, wildly,

“O, my boy, my poor boy! don’t go to throw your life away in a bad cause! Stay with your old father and me ——”

But her husband drew her away. “Let him go!” he said, with bitterness. “What does he care for us? He’s a rebel against his king, and he can’t be expected to obey his parents. Let him go, and take my curse with him!”

A cry of horror burst from the young man’s lips, but before he could speak his father shut the door and locked it. He turned, and, finding himself not alone, rushed rapidly away.

Percy had recognized him as a volunteer whose bravery was well known in the company to which he belonged. Thus was explained the violence which would not wait for apology, or hope for repentance; and the scene he had witnessed was probably not the first of the kind that had tried the heart of this faithful soldier of liberty. There were many such divided families during the war, especially in Jersey, where the majority of the inhabitants were zealous royalists.

As Major Grey approached the tavern where he had passed the night, he met many of his brother-officers, and on the doorstep stood Jem Henderson, who eagerly accosted him.

“See here,” he said. “These fellers are getting ready to march, they tell me, and I don’t seem to have anything particular to do. Now, I jest wish you ’d get me out a commission to be your *valley* — an’t that what they call ’em? I’ll take care o’ your hoss, and do sich-like things, you know.”

“I’ll do better than that for you, Jem. You shall have an ensign’s commission in a few days. You’re a brave fellow, and deserve it well; and you must allow me to do what I can to show my gratitude ——”

“Gratitude be hanged!” interrupted Jem, roughly, blushing like any girl at these praises. “Don’t you s’pose I know what I’m arter? If I’d a wanted to carry the color, I’d said so right out; but I don’t, you see. I an’t quite ready to go into this ere blessed war, as marm calls it. I’m kind o’ feared ’t would hurt me to be shot; and, though I did n’t mind runnin’ some risk to please Miss Evelyn and get you out o’ that cussed hole, it’s a mighty sight different keepin’ in

a risk all the time, and I an’t no notion o’ doin’ it. But I was tired o’ bein’ mewed up there in York, and so when the place got too hot for me I was glad to clear out, and now I want you to hire me. I’m a fust-rater for taking care o’ hosses.”

“I’m sure I should be glad to accept your offer,” said Percy; “but you must understand that I am poor, and a servant is a luxury beyond my means.”

“I won’t be no burden to you,” persisted Jem. “I can forage for myself and you too. I like you, somehow, and I want to stay with you a spell. When I can better myself I will.”

“Since you insist upon it, you shall have your own way,” replied Major Grey. “I’m afraid the result will be that we shall starve together; but what I have I will share with you.”

“You may do your own starvin’,” said Jem, laughing. “I an’t no genius that way. Now tell me where your hoss is, and arter this I’ll take care of him.”

“I’ll go with you and find him,” was the reply, and they went towards the stables. Jem cast many an anxious glance at his companion’s face, but, with rare delicacy of feeling, refrained from any reference to the trouble he suspected, and fancied he read in the thoughtful brow and compressed lips.

Most of the prisoners taken in battle had been already sent to Philadelphia, where they could be kept in greater security; but those most severely wounded had been left for the present in farm-houses near the scene of action, or were to be taken to Morristown, only twenty miles distant, where they could receive the care they needed. The carriage on which they

were conveyed, though a rude sledge, was the only available means of transportation; and being furnished by the village people with straw for beds, and woollen quilts, they were in some degree protected from the cold.

Gen. Washington had given orders that none of the severities endured by his own soldiers when taken prisoners should be retaliated upon those who fell into his hands; and one of his aids now stood by to see that all was arranged to make the journey as comfortable as circumstances would allow.

They had been laid upon the hay in the stable, as the softest bed the place afforded, in its crowded state. As Major Grey and his companion entered the door, two soldiers came forth, carrying between them a wounded officer. Turning back, when he noticed the uniform, he said to the aid,

“This must be a person of rank. Could the general have known he was so poorly accommodated?”

“He was brought in late last night, and this was the best we could do for him,” was the reply.

The wounded man overheard them, and began to swear at his lodgings, at the pain of his injuries, and finally at the clumsiness of his bearers. As they endeavored to lay him on the sledge, he made some unexpected movement, which caused one of the men to lose his hold, and let him fall to the ground. The distance was not great, but the jar caused such keen suffering that he fainted.

Percy assisted to lay him on his bed, and administer cordials, brought by the surgeon to restore consciousness. While doing so, he was impressed with a vague memory of having

elsewhere seen those bold, handsome features, with their peculiar hauteur and magnetic repulsiveness; yet, his cares being ended, he might have thought no more of it, had not Jem, as he led up the horse, asked abruptly, in a half-angry tone,

“Do you know, Major, what pesky sarpent you ’ve been a nussin’ there? Did you ever see Col. Stanley?”

“Never, but once—what do you mean?” he exclaimed, starting, as if from a dagger-thrust.

“He’s the cretur you ’ve been tendin’ there so careful! Blast him! who cares whether he lays easy or not?”

Jem’s honest indignation at the wrongs he knew, and those he suspected, found great relief in this outburst; but his hearer, who had one foot in the stirrup, reeled giddily, and caught at the bridle to keep himself from falling. When the momentary blindness had passed, he said, in a low, stern voice, like one who is insulted by the thoughtless proffer of a vain hope,

“You are mistaken—you must be! She said there could be no change effected;—before this time they must have left this country.”

“That was Col. Stanley, though. Think I don’t know him? If ’t would hurt his feelings any, I’d swear at him—the rascal!” insisted Jem, not a little alarmed at his companion’s appearance.

“Can you be right? But no. She said, positively—I see it all! It is worse than death to be so tortured!”

He seized the bridle again, and vaulted into the saddle. Motion, rapid, incessant, life-exhausting motion, could alone

relieve the restless misery of his soul, and he struck spurs into his horse and galloped away.

As a violent blow produces numbness, and only with returning life comes suffering; as, in the torture of "the hoop," the victim, after the first moments of his constrained position, ceases to feel pain, but, when the irons open, the rush of blood through the chilled and stiffened frame fills it with extremest agony; so Percy through the day endured more from reviving hope than he had from despair. The blow that fell upon his heart seemed certain and final, and a torpor, like death, had followed the first keen sense of grief. But now, the doubt, the suspense, the burning desire to know how far the change in public affairs had affected Col. Stanley's designs upon Evelyn, and a vindictive joy, which he could not suppress, at the danger and death threatening his helpless foe, caused such distraction of mind, that he could hardly attend to the duties of the present time, and every hour of their march to Morristown seemed like a year of mental torment.

Even after they arrived there, he had long to wait before his anxiety could be in the least relieved; for the van with the wounded travelled slowly, and it was late in the evening before Jem, with most diligent search, could obtain the information which enabled him to find Col. Stanley.

A large barn had been converted into a hospital, and here the surgeons were busy in ministering to the wants of the sufferers; but the officer, in deference to his rank, had been

carried into the adjoining house, where he now lay on a comfortable bed, in a small but neat apartment.

He seemed to be asleep as Major Grey entered, but moved restlessly, moaning and muttering, his lips parched, and his brain burning with fever; but no one was near to minister those attentions his case so imperatively demanded. Amid his incoherent words, Evelyn's name often occurred, coupled sometimes with terms of endearment, and sometimes with fierce threatenings of evil. Once or twice he called her his wife, and bade her wait upon him as a good wife should; but, even when his sleep was broken, and his wild, blood-shot eyes glared round the room, he seemed unconscious of his situation, and began giving directions for the contemplated voyage to England.

As Percy lingered there, the surgeon entered, accompanied by the mistress of the house. He seemed greatly annoyed at the state in which he found his patient.

"It's a sudden change," he said; "the man's system must have been out of order. There was nothing in his appearance this morning to warrant me in thinking he could n't be brought on in safety. But now—" he shook his head professionally, and, with a scowling brow, proceeded to examine the bandages over the wounded limb, and to measure out medicines for the night.

But when he commenced giving the woman directions respecting their administration, she exclaimed,

"You need n't trust to me! If this gentleman is any kin to the sick man, he'd better stay and take care of him; for

my own husband is sick abed with a fever, and I an't goin' to leave him to take care of a stranger!"

"But the man will die, if he don't have the very best of care," remonstrated the doctor.

"I can't help it, if he does! I'll give him house-room, and do what I can for him; but I an't goin' to neglect my man for nobody. So you may get him a nuss yourself, for I can't promise to take care of him. I've got nothin' but my two hands to help me do every chore about this house, and see to the children and all,— and I an't made of iron, neither!"

No contradiction could reasonably be made to this statement, though, from the woman's voice and manner, she might have been called "smart as a steel-trap;" and the surgeon turned to Major Grey, with an appealing look.

"I don't know you, sir," he said, "but you seem to be watching by this man. Can you stay and take care of him?"

"Can't a nurse be procured elsewhere?" was the hesitating reply.

"I'm sure I don't know where one can be got for to-night, and he must not be left alone. It'll be death to him, if he is. He'll be wild with delirium before morning. Won't some of the neighbors come in?" he inquired of the woman.

"Perhaps they will, if you ask 'em; but I reckon they've all got their hands full, now their houses are crammed with soldiers. At any rate, I han't no time to go runnin' round after watchers — there's the baby waked up, now! You

must do the best you can without me!" And, in obedience to a faint cry that reached her ears, she left the room.

"Well, you see how it is—will you stay, to-night?" said the doctor, with some impatience, for he was in haste to depart.

A struggle had been going on in Percy's mind from the moment he entered the room. Here was Evelyn's persecutor, his own enemy, wounded, dying. Should he leave him to his fate? Is it strange that he hesitated? Scorn him not, ye who are strong in virtue! Bitter had been the wrong he had endured; and it might be lasting as life itself, if this man survived. Even when he threw off his cloak, and signified his intention to remain, he was moved less by Christian charity, than by a stubborn self-respect, that held him back with iron hand from staining his soul with crime.

Thankful to be relieved, the surgeon gave his directions and went away; but the medicines he ordered seemed to have little effect as the night wore on, and Percy, who remembered his mother's skill in nursing, resorted to her favorite remedy. He brought cold water from the well, and bathed his patient's face and hands, applying it freely to the head, until the racking pain was soothed and the fever abated. Gradually quiet took the place of incessant motion, and Col. Stanley sank into the first sound sleep he had known since his injury.

Silently the hours passed, but Percy Grey had no inclination for repose. His mental trouble, the turmoil of his thoughts, made him almost envy the death-like insensibility of the sick man.

Towards morning, Col. Stanley waked and called for water, of which he drank again and again, until the supply was exhausted, and Percy went to obtain more. When he returned he found his patient sitting up in bed, his eyes rolling in sudden frenzy, as he tore off the bandages about his head, and pulled at his clothes, exclaiming,

“See, see! Take them away — burn them up — they are wet — faugh! — they are wet with *her* blood!”

“This is only water — you are dreaming!” said Major Grey, trying to replace them. But he clutched at them wildly, shouting,

“Horrible! what are they here for? — take them away! I tell you it is blood — her blood! She said her heart was broken, and don’t broken hearts bleed? *This is her blood, I say. They are soaked with it!”

He threw them to the furthest corner of the room, and shuddered violently. An irrepressible question burst from his hearer’s lips, —

“Whose blood is it? — Is it Evelyn Chester’s?”

The sick man, arrested, even in his ravings, by the passion of that tone, paused, with a momentary change of expression, and leered at him cunningly.

“Evelyn’s? — Miss Chester’s? Who calls my wife by that name? You should say Mrs. Stanley, when you inquire for her. But, pray, who are you?”

“No matter who I am. Are you married — tell me!”

“Married — certainly — was n’t it all arranged? — I meant to be honest then, I assure you — I never meant to deceive

her,” was the reply, followed by a hoarse, horrid laugh; and then, with incoherent muttering, “But that other one — did you see her? She came here while you was gone. She stood by the bed — I saw her. She covered me all over with her blood. Faugh! it made me sick! There she is again! — take her away!” he shrieked.

“There is no one here but myself,” said Percy, sternly, forcing him to lie down. He struggled a moment, and then, with a change of mood, said, earnestly,

“I assure you she has no business here. Why did she come? She has no claim on me, — not the slightest. It was all a joke! ha, ha! — poor little fool!”

Indignant at the foul wickedness thus dimly shadowed forth, Percy was about to speak; but now oaths and curses began to issue from the purple, quivering lips, and anger was lost in pity at the crowd of frightful images that thronged the bewildered brain. With difficulty he persuaded him to remain in bed, and to take the anodyne which had been ordered if this phase of delirium should ensue. But Col. Stanley did not sleep again that night, and when the surgeon came, early in the morning, he looked extremely troubled.

“He’ll die, for certain,” said he, drawing Percy aside. “I have tried everywhere, and can’t get a woman to nurse him who looks as if she was capable to do anything; and I find he is a high officer. We don’t take a great many of them, and they count up in exchanging prisoners. The general will be sorry to have me lose him, on that account; but I don’t see any help for it.”

“Is the case desperate?” asked Percy, trembling to feel the irrepressible thrill of joy that passed over him.

“It is desperate because he can’t have good nursing. As the woman here says, everybody in town has their house full and their hands full. If he could be well taken care of for only a few days, the symptoms might change favorably, and the inflammation be subdued. The wound was n’t so bad in the first place, — I think that fall must have hurt him.”

“And if a capable nurse can be procured, you think he may recover?”

“Very likely. He looks like a pretty good constitution. But you — I see you are an officer, and I suppose you can’t be with him constantly. Is he a friend of yours — is Col. Stanley?”

A peculiar expression upon Percy’s face, as he replied in the negative, attracted the surgeon’s attention, and he said,

“You’re sick yourself! Was you in the engagement? was you wounded?”

“Not at all. I have but just escaped from New York. I was taken prisoner with Gen. Lee, and only joined the army after they had crossed Stony Brook. I am Major Grey —”

“O, yes! — Major Grey. I heard the circumstance mentioned. Allow me to congratulate you, sir. But I must be off. Will you remain here?”

“Not at present; indeed, I have little skill at nursing. But, if some one will stay with Col. Stanley this morning, I think I can procure a competent person to take care of him for a few days. I can return this afternoon.”

"If you can, you'll take considerable anxiety off my shoulders; for, as I explained to you, I should like to save this case, if I can. I'll send one of the soldiers in to relieve you, sir, in a few moments;" and the worthy surgeon hurried away to the barn-hospital. In a short time the man he had promised to send made his appearance, and, as Col. Stanley, though suffering greatly, was less violent than he had been, Major Grey left him, and went to his lodgings to breakfast.

Through twenty-four hours of incessant excitement, he had not tasted food.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

A SHORT distance from the house, he met Jem Henderson, who had just discovered that he was not in his room, and was coming to find him.

“You’ll jest kill yourself, and that’s all the good this blessed war, as marm calls it, ’ll do you!” Jem said, reproachfully, as he surveyed his friend with a scrutinizing glance.

“It would be a blessed war, indeed, if it would do that for me!” returned Percy, bitterly.

“Now, Major, I would n’t give it up so! — more ’specially jest now, when you’ve nabbed the very devil himself! If I was you, I’d take pretty good care he did n’t get back again, to trouble nobody. Law! won’t them black eyes o’ Miss Evelyn’s shine when she hears the colonel is a prisoner? I wish we had a Sugar-House to shet him up in! Fust they trap you, and now you trap him. That’s what I call fair play all round.”

“Jem,” said Major Grey, speaking in a very low tone, “she is Miss Evelyn no longer. She is married to Col. Stanley.”

Jem gave a prolonged "whew!" and snapped every one of his finger-joints before he answered.

"I don't believe it!" he said, stoutly.

"It is true."

"How do you know?"

"I watched with Col. Stanley last night. He is very sick — delirious — but when I asked him that question he seemed rational for a moment, and he told me so."

"He lied, then! He'd be more likely to lie about it, if he had his senses," replied Jem, defiantly.

"I fear it is too true. It only confirms Miss Evelyn's letter."

"Well, now, look here," said Jem, pausing abruptly, and placing himself directly before his companion, "if I'd known you was going to be sich a fool as to set up all night with that pesky sarpent, and then make yourself miserable about what he said when he was crazy, I'd gone and took care on him myself. What's the good, Major? Things is bad enough for you and Miss Evelyn, that's certain, though I don't exactly understand how. But she looked like death when she give me that letter, and that ere long-worded darkey o' their'n told me they was all going to England; so I know something is to pay, and this ere Col. Stanley is to the bottom of it. But now what's the good o' giving up? Who knows he'll ever go back to plague anybody? Let him alone, and I reckon he'll go where he belongs."

"Would it be right?" said Percy, half aloud.

"Who cares if 't an't?"

“I do,” was the thoughtful reply.

It seemed to open a new train of reflections in Jem’s mind. He resumed his walk, and, after a while, said, in a less vehement tone,

“Any way, Major, I would n’t give up. It’s all nonsense to give up — and all that! An’t it always darkest jest before day? An’t folks always disappointed jest when they feel sure? The devil helps ’em into a scrape, but he don’t help ’em out. You can see how ’t is by this very last shine o’ the general’s, down there to Trenton — cuttin’ up the way he did. The folks in York thought he ’d know, for once, when he was beat. and be willing to stay beat; and they was all ready to go home and tell how the war was over. That was the talk the day I came from there. But, by jingoes! he gets licked, every turn, — but he’s up to time, for all that, and this ere blessed war an’t goin’ to be finished in a hurry. So don’t give up, Major. I don’t believe one word about Miss Evelyn bein’ married.”

Though he was cheered, in spite of himself, by Jem’s courageous incredulity, Percy could not forbear reflecting, with a sigh, that the disappointment which comes when we are surest affects the things we hope for, as well as those we fear. By this time they had reached the tavern, and, learning that Jem had already breakfasted, Major Grey requested him to procure for him a sleigh or sled, and harness his horse into it, as he intended driving out to his father’s farm, which was about ten miles distant. This was readily accomplished, and, as a light snow had fallen the previous night, and made the trav-

elling passable, it was not many hours before the sound of his sleigh-bells brought the family once more to the door to welcome him.

They were not surprised at this speedy return, having been informed of the battle of Princeton, and that the army were moving to Morristown; and so eager were they to hear all the particulars of the event, that some time elapsed before he found an opportunity to unfold the chief purpose of his visit.

But, when dinner-time came, he followed his mother into the pantry adjoining the kitchen, where she had gone to mix the corn-cake that was to be the chief dish on the table. He watched her a moment in silence, as she stirred the yellow meal; and, looking up to ask some trivial question, she was startled at the expression of his face.

“Let me speak with you,” he said, in a low tone. “The others may know what I have to say by and by, but I must tell you first.”

He paused, strongly agitated, and his mother’s heart beat violently as she saw his efforts at self-control; for she knew it was no slight thing which moved him thus. Frank, who had followed him, not divining his desire to be alone with his mother, caught a glimpse of their faces, and stood unseen in the doorway, hesitating and amazed. Percy went on, rapidly

“There is a man who has injured me beyond all remedy or redress, — a man whose life is a deadly bane to the happiness of one I prize most dearly. You look surprised, mother — all is changed since I was here ——”

“Poor boy! I saw it in thy face. Go on. What of this man?”

“He is now in Morristown, a prisoner, wounded, ready to die if he cannot have the most assiduous care. The town is full of soldiers and the sick. There is no one to attend particularly to his case. Mother, what am I to do?”

Mrs. Grey did not reply immediately. Her mild eyes filled with tears, her lips trembled, and an expression came over her face as if maternal love struggled with an emotion scarcely more strong or pure. Then she said,

“‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.’ Percy, is not that the reading?”

“I knew you would say so!” he exclaimed, and, as he turned aside to hide the emotion he could no longer control, he saw his brother.

“Don’t be angry, Percy,” Frank said, striving to choke down his own feelings. “I ought not to have listened, but I couldn’t help it. You are a noble fellow — but, mother, that’s an awful bitter dose, that text, unless you put on the rest of the sentence. I always thought that remark about heaping coals of fire was put in as a sort of consolation to us poor sinners when we try to do our duty. Put ’em on to that fellow’s head by the shovelful — I would! Who is he, Percy?”

“His name is Stanley. He lies very ill.”

“What is all this about?” interrupted Mr. Grey, attracted to the spot by Frank’s remark.

“I spoke of a sick man — a British officer — who needs

better care than it is possible just now to procure at Morristown. I came over to see if mother would go back with me and nurse him for a day or two, until the immediate danger is passed, or some one else can be procured."

"Now, mother, you'd better go. Agnes and me can do the chores round, and keep house as well as not," said the old man, cheerfully. "Can't we, Agnes?"

She looked up with a smile of acquiescence, as she flitted by with the salt fish she was about to broil for dinner, and Mrs. Grey replied,

"I think I'll go. Frank's hand is better, and he will not need me now. I am moved to undertake this duty, though, as Frank says, it is hard."

"Hard! Why, mother, I never thought but what you liked nussin'!" exclaimed her husband.

"Thee knows I do, dear," she answered, quietly. "It was the spirit, and not the flesh, that shrank from this. But I will go."

"And a friend o' Percy's, too!" pursued Mr. Grey, with a perplexed manner.

"He is no friend of mine," said his son, quickly.

"Who is he, then? What's his name?"

"Do you remember the two gentlemen, with a lady, who staid here a short time, one afternoon, while their carriage was being mended? He was one of them,—a tall, haughty-looking man. He is a colonel in the British army. His name is Stanley."

A faint sound, between a sigh and an exclamation, reached

Frank's ear with these words, and he looked at Agnes. She stood a little apart, her hands pressed upon her heart, as was her habit when suddenly moved, her head bent forward in an attitude of eager interest, and her eyes fixed upon the speaker's face with an expression so thrilling, so intense, that a fierce pang of jealousy shot through his soul.

"It is Percy she loves, not me!" he thought; and, for the first time in his life, he envied his brother the superiority in which he had before gloried, as if it were his own.

The conversation proceeded. Old Mr. Grey shook his head with a knowing air, exclaiming,

"Well, now! I like that, extraordinary well! He seemed too proud to look at us that day, and now he's come to be beholden to you for to make him comfortable! That's the way the wheel goes round! 'T an't safe to despise nobody, for we don't none on us know what we're coming to. I remember him well enough—and that lady, too. She was a pretty cretur, and not a bit stuck-up, neither, for all she had such a proud look in her eyes. What did you say her name was?"

"It was Miss Chester. The other gentleman was her father."

"And was n't the colonel a beau o' her'n? Somehow, he kind o' handed her round as if he thought she belonged to him."

Percy's face was colorless, and something in his voice betrayed the pain at his heart, as he replied, briefly,

"Probably she is now his wife."

Mr. Grey scrutinized his son's face a moment, and a new light seemed to dawn upon his mind. He asked no more questions, and, abruptly seating himself, called them to the table. Agnes had stolen softly away.

The dinner-hour passed almost in silence; and, if they ate sparingly, it was less on account of the lenten fare, than the dead weight which rested upon their spirits. The father glanced often at his wife and children, not a little hurt at believing himself shut out from their confidence; and each of those three had at heart a deep disquiet, and saw in the future a struggle and a sacrifice, that must be borne alone. After the meal was finished, Mrs. Grey went to prepare herself for the drive. As she left the kitchen, she met Agnes at the door.

"I was coming to seek you," she said. "O, Mrs. Grey, let me go in your place. I am a good nurse — indeed, I am! I will not leave him a moment. O, I must go! I cannot fill your place here at home — you are needed here. But nobody needs me. Do let me go!"

She was so excited and earnest, that, in spite of her better judgment, for a moment Mrs. Grey hesitated. But Percy, who had overheard the request, interfered immediately.

"You wouldn't think of such a thing, mother!" said he. "The bedside of that man, in his delirium, is no place for a delicate girl. Agnes has neither the bodily or the mental strength necessary for such a task."

"I am stronger than I look — I have quite regained my

health. O, you don't know how much I can bear!" said Agnes, nervously.

"It will never do. It is kind of thee to wish it, but it will never do," replied Mrs. Grey. "Thee might be employed in light duties about the sick, but thee has over-rated thy strength in wishing to undertake this task. I shall be gone a few days, and thee can be very useful here at home."

She passed on in her gentle, firm manner, which no one ever thought of disputing, and the girl remained standing in the entry. The kitchen door had closed of itself. No one saw the large tears which gathered slowly and ran over her cheeks, or the frantic gesture of impatient disappointment with which she wrung her hands, and pressed them once more over the wildly-throbbing heart.

Frank, who had been standing listlessly by the fire, went to the door, where Percy had brought the sleigh, and was waiting his mother's appearance.

"You have never made a confidant of me," he said, in his impulsive way, "but I have guessed something about this matter, and it seems to me you are just flying in the face of Providence. Seems to me, if I was you, I'd stand one side, and let the Lord manage things his own way."

"I should be glad if I had not known about Col. Stanley," answered Percy. "But I sought him out for my own satisfaction, and found him as you have heard. You remember the words which came first from mother's lips when I told her of it?"

“Yes. But, Percy, what are you going to do, if this man lives? What do you expect? Are you relying upon his generosity, or magnanimity, or any other five-syllabled virtue you may think he possesses? Because, if you are, I’ll bet a shad you’re mistaken!”

“I expect nothing—I hope for nothing!” answered his brother, gloomily. “I am in that pass where a man must walk straight in the path made for him, or he stumbles and falls utterly.”

“Are you sure Miss Chester will thank you for your pains?” asked Frank, after a short pause.

“At least, she will understand me!” was the reply.

“Well, you must do as you please,” said his brother, with some impatience. “You are altogether on too high a scale for me, and I thought I’d try and bring you to a little common sense. I should feel a good deal more like shooting the man than nursing him.”

“My son, what’s thee saying?” exclaimed his mother’s voice, behind him. “Thee speaks unadvisedly in giving thy brother such counsel. He has a better rule than that.”

“No doubt you’d say so,” replied Frank; “but the rule you refer to, if it is the one you quoted, was made so long ago, it could n’t have been intended for the present state of society. However, go your own way—you and Percy—and we’ll see what comes of it. One good thing about my plan is, that it can be used after yours has failed. It would in any case be the *last resort*.”

He handed his mother into the sleigh, and watched them

drive off. When he went in-doors again, Agnes was busy about her household duties, and even his eyes could detect nothing different from her usual manner. But the idea he had received would not leave him, and, with the perversity usual to a man in love, he hugged it to his heart, and made himself miserable over it.

Day after day passed, and still Mrs. Grey continued absent. The look of wistful sorrow in Agnes' eyes grew more intense, and oftener her lips turned white, and her hands were pressed above her heart, as if in a spasm of pain. But she had ever a smile and a pleasant word for those who addressed her, and attended to the housekeeping quietly and mechanically; or, when those cares were ended, took refuge behind a long seam of sewing, which Frank insisted she must set up nights to pick out, as it was never finished. She answered, in her slow, gentle tones, to Mr. Grey's occasional observations, and exerted herself to cheer him; for he had not during years before been separated from his wife, and he missed her sadly. But neither of them noticed that Frank's careless nonsense had ceased, that his words were full of moody bitterness, and his customary vivacity had vanished.

One evening, when nearly a week had elapsed, just as the twilight shadows were creeping over the low walls of the kitchen, the old farmer roused from a dreamy revery, and, turning to his son, said, with unwonted animation,

“Mother's staid as long now as she said she would, at the very furthest; and, I tell you, I shall be extraordinary glad to see her home again.”

‘Do you suppose she will come to-morrow?’

“I know she will! ’T would be a master strange thing if she didn’t come when she said she would. I mean to make Percy jest take me over to Morristown to see the gin’ral. ’T would do me a master sight o’ good to shake hands with him. If ever there was a man raised up for a special purpose, it’s that man. Providence takes care on him, and he never ’ll be beat in *this* world, I tell you!”

“No doubt he ’d be glad to know you’re sure of it!” said Frank. “I reckon he has some doubts about it himself, just now. I don’t know how he can help being discouraged at the way things go.”

“He an’t no need to be discouraged — he’s under the special care o’ Providence, as I said afore. What else saved him down there to Ramapo Creek? You hearn Percy tell on’t. Jest a little stream between ’em — our folks all worn out — half-starved — scarce any powder or shot for their guns, and none too many o’ them, and Gen. Howe with all his army in good condition. What kep’ him from coming across that ere little stream? ’T wan’t nothin’ but Providence! There was n’t no reason why them prowlin’ soldiers were so ’mazin’ indifferent, all of a sudden, when they see the prey right in their power!”

“Perhaps it is so,” said Frank, absently. “He is a brave man, and deserves success.”

“’T an’t his bravery — ’t an’t his desarts, neither!” persisted Mr. Grey. “Perhaps you don’t understand me, Frank; you an’t watched the ways o’ this world as long as I

have. There is a Power above us all, and them that looks can see how it takes care on us."

"Do you really think so? Does God care for each one of us? Does he notice us?" said Agnes, at his side. She had drawn her low seat nearer to him, and, resting one hand on his knee, looked up earnestly, as if her whole soul hung upon his words.

"I an't no manner o' doubt on't, dear," he answered, laying the delicate little hand in his, and caressing it softly.

"Why, then, does he not hear us when we pray to him? Why is he so deaf to our cries? Why is there so much wrong, such terrible evil, such deep suffering, in the world? O, surely, surely we are too feeble, too weak, to attract his notice, and he does not know what we endure, or he would pity us!"

She wrung her hand away from his, and stretched it out towards heaven, with a passionate gesture of entreaty and reproach.

"Poor little gal, you're on the dark side o' this question now, an't ye? but maybe you'll come out into the light by'm by. There's a good deal o' puzzle about it, I know, but there's full as much to make us believe. Look at all them Bible stories about the ravens feeding the prophet, and all that. You b'lieve 'em, don't you?"

She looked doubtful, and shook her head, as if such far-off consolation did not reach her case; and Frank said, half jestingly; half bitterly,

"But the only ravens we have nowadays are crows, and

the prophets we call witches. I believe the Bible, and so does Agnes, I suppose; but it don't seem as if the Lord governs this world as he used to, or heaven was as near to earth as it once was."

His father mused a while, with a quiet smile of certainty stealing over his face. Then he said,

"It's natural for you young things to doubt. When you get impatient and restless, you don't have no past providences to fall back upon, as old folks do. Listen to me, now. I'll tell you a story about my mother; and it's a true one, too, though it's e'en most as wonderful as Elijah and the ravens.

"You know, Frank, I lived on Mass'chusetts Bay when I was a youngster. Well, my mother was left a widow when I was a little feller; but this happened afore she knowed she was never a goin' to see my father agin. They lived in a lonesome place, a good many miles from any neighbors, and sometimes did n't see a soul but themselves for days together. 'T was a tol'able good place for a farm, and so my father took it up, and they managed to get along with what they grew, and a little fishin' now and then. Wal, the summer arter I was born, my mother had a fever and rheumatiz so bad that arter she got better she was lame so she could n't walk a step. The gal that nussed her when she was sick had to go home, and she was alone, with me and my brother to take care on; but she thought she could get along for a day, and so my father took the boat, one morning, and went off to fish. He had n't been gone long afore there came up an awful thunder-squall, and she never see my father arter that. He was

drowneded, childern, drowneded! and she left a young widow, with two babies to work for."

His voice grew husky for a moment, but he went on, without pausing for the exclamation of pity which his listeners uttered.

"Night came, and she was all alone; but still she hoped he'd been driven out by the storm, and would work into some harbor. But day after day went on, and nobody came near her. There was n't much in the house to eat, for the provisions was most out when my father went away, and he was going to the next town to sell the fish and get more. She had a nussin baby, and another two year old, and what to do she did n't know. She managed to shuffle round the house, but she could n't walk and carry the young ones, not even to save their lives when they was starvin'; and she began to think they would starve afore anybody came near 'em.

"Wal, there was a cat, a great gray cat, that had been in and out round the house, for a few months; but they never had made much on her, for they was n't very fond o' cats. One mornin' the oldest child was cryin' for bread, and she was dyin' o' weakness herself, and she said to herself, 'Dear, dear, what should they do?'

"Wal, the cat had been layin' on the doorstep, and when she hearn marm kind o' cry out like that, she jumped up and looked right straight in her face, and made tracks for the woods that was all round the house. She was gone nigh an hour, and when she came back she had a great fat robin in her mouth; and she brought it and laid it down at my marm's

feet, and looked up in her face and mewed again, and never offered to touch it, though marm was so astonished and frightened-like, that she did n't pick it up for some time.

“Wal, she made a broth of it and fed my brother, and eat the rest herself; and she said nothin' in her life, afore or arterwards, ever tasted so good as that ere broth.”

“That story is a regular cat-tail, father! How do you account for it?” said Frank, incredulously.

“I don't account for it. I know it's true. And that warn't all there was to it. The next morning the cat went again, and that time she brought home a full-grown partridge; and for four days she did the same thing reg'lar. She always went about the same time, and always brought home something. Now, was n't that a clear case of Providence? Did n't the Lord care partic'lar for that poor woman and her babies?”*

“Are you sure that is true?” asked Frank, in an excited tone.

“True as I'm a livin' cretur,” replied his father. “I'd take my oath on 't afore anybody.”

“Then it is the most wonderful thing I ever heard of! What became of the cat?”

“Wal, arter four days some o' the neighbors come along, and they took marm and the childern into the village, where they could see to 'em, for they was pretty sure father must be dead; and nobody ever saw the cat arterwards. Marm would a given e'enamost anything to a found her; but she

* A true story.

never could hear as anybody had seen her. 'T was most extraordinary."

"But all are not so cared for," persisted Agnes, after a pause, in a sharp, bitter tone. "Is the Almighty partial? Why does he fill some lives with gladness, and leave others to want, and struggle, and ceaseless, wearing pain?"

"And why," added Frank, moodily, "are some so uniformly successful, gaining even more than they desire, — what others, who are left all their days to disappointment and defeat, would give the world to possess?"

"These things seem hard to you, childern, I know," replied his father. "Time has been when I have thought, myself, now sich and sich things is the very worst that could happen; but I've been brought through 'em, and so'll you. And when you get through, and come to look back and see it all, you'll say you've been dealt with pretty middlin' well."

The old man smiled quietly as he spoke. Sitting there, in the dreamy firelight, his life-voyage so nearly done, the cries of these young hearts, striving to pierce the mystery of existence, sounded like the voice of tempest-tossed waves to the mariner safe on shore.

"But it is so long before we are old! It is so hard to wait!" sighed Agnes.

"Yes, it takes patience, childern — patience and faith. We must believe; and what we don't know now, we'll know hereafter. Eternity, etarnity's the place, childern, where the snarls'll be taken out o' this tangle!"

The tranquil assurance of his tones soothed, if it did not

convince, and there was no reply. The glow of the fire fell over Agnes' face, and Frank, looking out from the shadow where he sat, watched her unobserved. After a short time she arose and went out. He followed, and found her standing at the open door. The full moon made a second day, softer and purer than sunshine, and by its radiance he saw the same expression of weary impatience, of doubt, and of grief.

He stood beside her for a few moments without speaking, and then brought a shawl and wrapped it about her, saying the air was keen, and she might take cold.

"Shall we go in?" she asked.

"O, no! Stay a while. I always make it a point of duty, to stay out a little while, such nights as these, so as to patronize the moon, and let her know her efforts are appreciated. She does the best she can at shining, poor thing!"

Agnes looked at him with a faint smile. "You are always light-hearted!" she said.

"I am? — Agnes, at this moment I am ready to go mad with disappointment and envy. Your own heart, with all the burden of grief you will not let us share, is not heavier than mine."

His voice was full of bitterness and reproach; but she answered, meekly,

"Forgive me! I know they who jest are not always gay. But you have seemed happy. What has happened to change you so?"

He seized her hand, and bent down to look into her face, as he answered,

“ Shall I tell you? O, Agnes, why will you waste on another the love I would give my life to win?”

Her startled look of terror, as she shrank back into the shadow, arrested the words which crowded to his lips.

He stood still, quivering with excited feeling, and she replied, hesitatingly,

“ What do you mean? How did you know? Frank, what is it you are saying?”

“ I say, I love you!” he exclaimed, impetuously. “ Don’t be frightened, Agnes! I know very well it’s no use. But why must Percy win everything? Honor, fame, — accident may give me these, as they have been given to him; but how shall I gain the love he has stolen from me?”

The rigid tension of her hand relaxed, and she no longer strove to free it from his grasp. She came again into the light, and said, calmly,

“ You mistake. I like you far better than I do him. You have always been kind to me, but he treats me coldly. It is so easy to suspect the unfortunate!”

“ He shall not suspect you. Give me the right to protect you, — be my wife, Agnes, — and you shall be loved, honored, sheltered, in a heart that can never grow cold or change.”

She turned away her eyes from that pleading gaze, and said, mournfully,

“ You should not speak so. I have no right to hear such words. Consider what it is you ask. You know nothing of my past life — nothing of me, except what you have seen during our brief acquaintance. No, Frank, it cannot be!”

“What do I care for the past?” he said. “Do you suppose I have stopped to weigh chances, and make cool calculations? Good heavens! how little you know of love! I see that you have suffered; and, if you are not willing to tell me how, I believe you have good reason for silence. I think I love you better because I have pitied you so much. Agnes, the future shall bring you peace. I will give you home and friends, and you shall be happy, whether you want to or not. Speak! are you listening to me?”

With a quick motion she sank down on the doorstep, and, bending forward, laid her head upon his feet, and burst into a violent paroxysm of weeping. Frightened and perplexed, he sat down and endeavored to soothe her. She did not seem to heed him, but in a short time hushed her grief as suddenly as she had yielded to it, and, with a self-control wonderful to see, withdrew herself from his protecting arm, and answered him calmly and with firmness, though the pathos of her voice deepened as she proceeded.

“How shall I ever thank you for such love, such confidence? O, Frank, I never heard words like these! I never knew of an affection so noble, so generous! I would rather perish here this moment than give you pain; but, believe me, I can never, never be your wife. I shall go away from here soon, — I can find employment in nursing the sick at Morristown, — and after I am gone I will write to your mother all she has wished to know about me. I see now it would have been better to have told my whole story at once; but I dreaded to do it. I have been unfortunate, and people have so doubted

me, so insulted me, because of my misfortunes! Good and honorable men and women are sometimes very hard upon those they think have done wrong. I feared — I feared you all; though, indeed, I am innocent of evil. And, if I love another, in spite of the bitter past, God knows I have little hope. I am very, very unhappy. Pity me, but do not love me, for I can never be your wife!”

She glided away into the darkness of the entry and up the narrow stairs, leaving him agitated by a mighty conflict of compassion and dread.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ESTRAY.

FOR some time, after his conversation with Agnes on that eventful evening, Frank paced restlessly along the lonely, moonlit road. His heart and brain seethed painfully with bitter and perplexing thoughts of life and fate; and he almost doubted the benignant Power above, which controls the results of human action. Agnes' words had hinted darkly at something he had never allowed himself to fear concerning her. A barrier, more insurmountable than her affection for another, seemed rising between them; and, bravely as he struggled against it, he could not resist the sick feeling, that, though he might shield her from further misfortune, his love could be but a mockery, and her decision was just.

Suddenly, when he had reached the point where the road passed from the clearing into the surrounding forest, a figure stood in the path before him. So unconscious was he of its approach, so erect and still it stood, that he looked twice before he assured himself it was Lawontica. Even when she dropped from her shoulders the blanket which had half hidden her face, he hardly knew how to address her, for they had not

met since their angry parting by the spring ; but, as he hesitated, she came forward and laid her hand familiarly on his shoulder. The moonlight shone full in her face, and, though she smiled and gave him the usual greeting — “*poc-we, noc-sewun-minat!*” * — there was a gleam in her eyes that startled him.

“Have you forgiven me?” he said.

She laughed, and nodded her head assentingly.

“I shall begin to be afraid of you, if you are going to be such a stormy character!” he added. “Don’t you feel ashamed of yourself, to think how you treated me, the other day?”

Again she laughed and nodded, but there was a strange, metallic ring in the sound, and something shot across her face, as if a cloud had passed over the moon, and its shadow had fallen upon her.

Frank was in an excited mood, and her looks and gestures made him nervous.

“Why don’t you speak?” he said, sharply. “You might, at least, say you won’t do so again; — you owe me as much of an apology as that!”

Her hand dropped from his shoulder, and she drew back a little, with a shrinking motion, as if his words had hurt her. He noticed it, and said, in a more good-natured tone,

“I shall be owing you an apology, if I’m cross much longer, you think, don’t you? But, indeed, Lawontica, I’m out of sorts to-night, and I’m scolding myself more than you!’

* How do you do, brother?

“S’pose ’um Indian girl go ’way — white man no see ’um any more — no speak ’um bad or good! To-morrow me go — sartin me go to-morrow.”

She watched him nervously as she spoke; but, though at another time he would have expressed surprise and real sorrow at such news, he was then too much absorbed in his late disappointment to give heed to anything else, and only replied carelessly, with a slight lifting of the eye-brows,

“Ah! what ’s that for? Where are you going?”

She drew herself up, with a superb haughtiness, that well became her queenly form, and the tone of her reply.

“Lawontica is the great chief’s daughter. Me very high in my own peoples. Tamaque is one very great brave. Me go ’way with him to the lodge. He be my husband!”

“So you are going to be married!” said Frank, aroused to interest by the information. “Well, we shall be sorry to lose you; but pretty girls will get married! Come and see us once in a while, won’t you, and bring along your sanop.* We’ll make you a wedding cake, if we are ever lucky enough to have any more plums!—By the way,” he added, mischievously, “don’t scold your husband, will you?”

“Come and see!” she replied, pouting a little, as she was wont to do when he teased her.

“It’s too long a tramp through the woods, and I believe you have no carriage-road to your palace!” he answered, gayly.

She echoed the laugh, though not very heartily, and asked, pointing to the farm-house,

* Husband.

“You mother — he up there?”

“No, she is in Morristown. But father is there, and Agnes. Go on; they’ll be glad to see you. I’ll be there soon.”

She left him and entered the dwelling. The old farmer, with whom she was a favorite, welcomed her cheerfully, and Agnes urged her to partake of their frugal meal, which had just been placed on the table. She declined eating, but took her accustomed nook by the fire. She talked more than usual during the evening, manifesting no embarrassment when rallied respecting her approaching marriage, and appearing in good temper and fine spirits. To Frank and Agnes her presence was an unexpected relief from their own thoughts, and they were very glad when she consented to remain until morning. They were a merry group around the hearth that evening. The old farmer wondered at the suppressed excitement he detected in each glancing eye and burning cheek, but he little suspected the cause.

When the hour arrived for retiring to rest, Lawontica persisted in wrapping herself in the blanket and lying down before the kitchen fire, upon a skin spread for her accommodation. Here, with mutual good-night wishes, the family left her.

In the morning, Frank arose early to make the fire. He was not surprised to find the humble pallet empty, for she had told them she should leave before daylight; but Agnes did not appear at the usual time, and after Mr. Grey had arisen, and they had waited until surprise changed into anxiety,

the farmer went to her door and knocked repeatedly, without receiving any reply. He could not think her asleep at that hour, and, in great alarm, opened the door. The room was empty. The bed had been occupied, and the coverings thrown off, as if she had risen hastily, but nothing was disturbed or out of place.

Mr. Grey's exclamation of dismay brought Frank to his side. "She has gone — O, heavens! where has she gone? Am I to blame for this?" he cried, in self-reproach so violent, that his father asked what he could mean by such words. With rapid and confused syllables he confessed his love for Agnes, and their conversation the previous evening. When he had finished, his father stood a few moments in deep thought, and then replied,

"T an't that, I tell you! Sich a good little cretur as she was wouldn't go off any sich way, to scare us most out o' our senses. Besides, she said she was going to Morristown, and the natural way would be to go over this mornin' with Percy when he goes back; and you see she an't took her clothes — they're all in the closet there."

Frank glanced at the open closet, and then, with blank face, at his father.

"What can it be?" and then, with sudden lighting up of hope, "Perhaps, after all, she is only gone out for a walk with Lawontica," he said.

"Nonsense! What would she go to walk for, afore sunrise, this cold mornin', and a snow-storm comin' on?"

"What then? We must do something — we must look

somewhere!" exclaimed Frank, impatiently. "It's been snowing all night, too, and we may not be able to track her."

"Never see nothin' like it in *this* world!" ejaculated the old man, thoughtfully. "If she was carried off, Lawontica is to the bottom of it!"

"Impossible! She would n't do such a thing!"

Mr. Grey shook his head, in a slow, deliberative manner.

"Them Injins is plaguy onsartin, deceitful creturs! I would n't trust 'em — not one on 'em!"

"But, Lawontica — the young girl we have known so long! how could she be concerned in such a scheme, and what motive could she have for harming Agnes? But don't waste any more time in conjectures — let's see if there is any trace of footsteps about the doors."

A light snow had fallen during the night, obliterating all traces made previously; but, from the back door, upon this new snow, were the marks of Lawontica's moccasins. These were followed down the valley, through the woods, and even to the path up the hillside, and the door of the wigwam — those two regular footsteps, and no others near. Evidently, if Lawontica had had any hand in Agnes' abduction, she had not accompanied the kidnappers, and Frank was therefore not surprised to find her seated before her grandmother's fire. Her few articles of clothing were in a heap on the couch of skins beside her, and the curtain which had separated it from the rest of the apartment was taken down. She was packing up her possessions for a final removal.

She looked up, with an air of indifference, when he entered,

and to his impetuous questions answered, curtly, that she had left the house about midnight, as she had slept long enough, and found there were indications of a storm; but it commenced snowing before she reached the woods, and, finding the moon had set, she concluded to return and wait till morning. When she went out she shut the door, but when she returned she found it open. She had heard nothing, and, supposing the wind blew it open, laid down upon the warm hearth and slept until morning. The snow had ceased falling when she came home in the early dawn. She saw no traces of footsteps, and heard no sounds of violence during the night.

So much she told readily, manifesting neither curiosity nor sorrow at Agnes' disappearance; nothing more could be elicited by the most skilful cross-questioning, either from herself or from Sanoso, who corroborated her statements as far as she was able, and sustained a similar indifference to the object of his inquiries. He could not decide if it were Indian stolidity, or offended innocence, which caused this want of sympathy in his trouble, or if it was part of a deep-laid scheme of treachery. Utterly foiled in his purpose, he was obliged to return home as ignorant as he left; but it was some relief, when he arrived there, to find his mother and Percy waiting for him, with faces as anxious as his own.

Some moments were spent in a hurried discussion of the case. It seemed impossible that Agnes could have been carried from the house by force, without arousing any of the family; and it was equally impossible that she could wilfully have stolen away, without leaving one word to assure them of

her safety, without taking any change of clothing, or even such garments as were necessary, in order to brave with impunity the winter night. Treachery must have been at work; and to whom could suspicion point, except to the young girl to whom they had shown such continual kindness? What her motive might be, what cause she had of enmity towards Agnes, their imaginations failed to conjecture; but it was resolved to pursue the search in that direction. Agnes could not have gone to Morristown, or the returning party would have met her; and Frank took the sleigh to drive down the road leading to the coast, and make inquiries, while Percy and his mother went to Sanoso's wigwam. An hour or two had elapsed since Frank's visit there, and, as they came near, they saw six or eight Indian warriors in a group around the door, and Sanoso taking leave of her grandchild in a shrill, wailing chant, that reached them with a boding sound, even before they could see the hut. They hastened on, but, the moment they were visible, some one seemed to warn the others; the chant ended abruptly, Sanoso withdrew into her dwelling, and the party started off through the woods at a pace which made it useless to think of detaining them.

"Lawontica is determined to avoid us — that looks suspicious," said Percy. "We must see what we can do with Sanoso."

"I have less hope of gaining the truth from her than from the girl," replied his mother. "She used to deceive me frequently; but Lawontica's face, if not her lips, would always

tell me truly. Thee knows how she seemed to scorn herself for a lie."

"Yes, her faults were those of a bold and impetuous, and not of a sly, artful character; and, even now, I can hardly believe she was concerned in Agnes' disappearance. May it not be possible the girl has quietly withdrawn, to prevent the trouble she feared to make by a longer stay in our family?"

Mrs. Grey shook her head negatively, and they walked on in silence until they reached the door of the wigwam. The curtain was closed and fastened, but it yielded to Percy's impatient pull, and they saw Sanoso standing in the centre of the room, in an attitude of defiance at their intrusion.

"What for you here for? Me no want 'um see anybody!" she exclaimed.

"Sanoso, thee has just lost a daughter—thee should know how to pity me. Do tell me if thee knows anything about Agnes—the poor, young thing, who has been like a daughter in our house this winter?"

"Me lose 'um daughter—what for?" replied Sanoso, angrily. "Once my peoples all one—live all together;—s'pose my daughter married, her lodge little way off—me see 'um every week—very much me glad. Now my peoples all gone!"

She took a handful of corn from the mortar near, and scattered it around the cabin. "Just so—all gone," she repeated, sorrowfully; and then again, fiercely, "All gone!—who threw 'um 'way so?—who steal the land?—who cut

down the trees? White mans! Always white mans very bad to poor Indian."

"Thee speaks the truth only in a measure, Sanoso," said Mrs. Grey, motioning to her son to be silent. "I know, verily, that the land about here was bought and paid for, and thy tribe was very willing to move away and make room for the settlers. Others might have done wrong, but thee should n't blame us for what we condemn as much as thee does."

"Paid for!" said Sanoso, scornfully. "Very much you know what pay! S'pose white man say he buy 'um little land, he take large piece — give Indian fire-water — lum* — steal away his think — then he cheat him easy. When he want 'um anything, he say, 'brother, brother' — then he kick 'um like dog, and say, 'get out!'"

The wrinkled old face really glowed with the fire of youth, as she recounted the wrongs of her nation, and her auditors looked at each other in surprise at the truthful picture she presented. But they could not afford to waste time thus, when every moment was precious; and Mrs. Grey replied, in a soothing tone, which, probably, had more effect because the short-lived anger had expended itself in words.

"Sister, when thee was sick I took thee to my house and took care of thee. It was a long winter and a cold winter, but none of thy people came to look after thee, to see thee did not starve and freeze. My boys brought thee wood and food to eat. Who was kindest to thee then? Thee is an old woman; thee has lived here many years; did any man

* Rum.

ever do thee wrong? Is not the land wide enough for us all? Why should thee quarrel with thy friends?"

Sanoso made no reply, but sat down in the chimney-corner, and, leaning her head upon her hands, recommenced her wailing chant, "nosa, ahkie, nosa!"*

Mrs. Grey sat down beside her, and, imitating her attitude, joined, with her low, gentle voice, in the monody. The old woman could not help betraying her surprise at this unexpected proceeding, but persisted in the song for a few moments, until, yielding gradually to the spell of those plaintive tones, her voice grew fainter, and, ceasing abruptly, she turned, and said,

"Qua,† sister? What for you come here for, ask me 'bout your daughter?"

"Thee can tell me, Sanoso, if Lawontica has been concerned in taking her away; thee must know it. Understand, we do not say she has been carried off by force, or that thy people mean to do her any harm; but we think, even if she wished to go with thy child, we ought to go after her and bring her home. She is not fit to live in the woods, and we must find her. Will not thee tell us what thee knows?"

"Sanoso no know 'um nothin'!" she replied, earnestly.

"Is it possible? O, don't say so! Tell me the truth about it. We won't blame you. There are some things that make us think Agnes may have wished to go with your people. Do tell me the truth?"

"Sister," repeated the old woman, solemnly, "long time

* My child — alas! my child!

† Well.

ago me bad woman, me no care nothin' 'bout nothin', 'cept what me eat an' drink, an' keep me warm in winter; — me lie, me steal — me ve'y bad woman. But me no know me bad — me no tink 'bout it. One day you sanop,* he say, 'Sanoso, you lie so, sartin devil he catch you!' Then me frightened, me 'fraid stay alone, me tink all time 'devil, he catch me.' Well, one day me go to your house — me feel ve'y bad — me no eat, no drink — look ve'y sober. You say, what the matter? I tell you. You tell me, don't be frightened — devil no catch you, 'cause you solly. Then you read me out the Bible 'bout Saysoos,† how he love us. That just what me want. Then me ve'y happy. Now me ve'y good — me no lie — sister, me no lie 'bout this. Sartin me hope go Wahsoke ‡ when me die, me know nothin' 'bout this!"

The impressiveness of her manner compelled belief, but left her hearers more than ever perplexed in regard to the mystery which shrouded Agnes.

"If such is the case, we must not delay here longer, except to find out which way Lawontica has taken," said Percy, speaking for the first time.

"The trail is open!" replied Sanoso, sententiously.

"That is true, and so broad a trail must be easily followed. We will collect the neighbors, and make preparations to start. Come, mother!"

After a few words of sympathy, which their own trouble did not make her forget to speak to Sanoso, Mrs. Grey and

* Your husband.

† Jesus.

‡ Heaven.

Percy left the wigwam. Soon after they arrived at home, Frank returned, with a dejected face, telling his ill-success. But his inquiries had aroused their neighbors to interest, and in a few hours a band of eight men, headed by Frank and his brother, set out for the rescue.

They were not experts in this business, for their relations with the Indians had been so peaceful as to afford them little experience in the wiles of savage warfare. So much time also had been lost in preparation, that they had not gone half a dozen miles before darkness closing in compelled them to pause in their search. The next morning, they started with the earliest light, but so much snow had fallen that the trail became more and more obscure. Frank's impatient heart was like to break with the frequent mistakes and pauses of the party; and, but for his overpowering earnestness, they might have turned back in discouragement. At length, they found the smouldering fire of the last night's encampment, and, perceiving they were right thus far, went on more hopefully; but again the twilight of the short winter day induced a cessation of their labors, and the object of their journey was not accomplished. Burning with anxiety, Frank left the party cooking supper over the fire they had made in a secluded hollow, and climbed to the top of a craggy hill near, in a faint hope of seeing or hearing some indication of the Indians. The country around was wild and broken, but a stream of some width had worn for itself a way through the hills, and, looking down the opening thus made, he fancied something like the reflection of a light was visible through

the murky air. Pausing a moment, to satisfy himself it was not the rising moon, he retraced his steps, and imparted to his companions his suspicions. Percy and two others followed him in the direction indicated. They walked down the frozen bed of the stream for a quarter of a mile, when, at a sudden bend, the brightness increased, and a few more rods brought them in full view of a large camp-fire glancing from behind low bushes which bordered the brow of a precipice overlooking the river.

“This is not favorable to our hopes,” said Percy, arresting his brother’s eager steps.

“Why not? There is the light—let’s make for it, and see if she is there.”

“She is not there, I am sure. A party who had a captive to guard would never make a fire in that spot, the most conspicuous in all the country round.”

Percy’s comrades felt the truth of this remark, and, for a few moments, none replied. In the darkness they heard Frank grinding his teeth with the suppressed breathing of excitement and distress.

“What shall we do, then?” said one.

“I will creep forward till I can get a view of them, and then, if she is not there, we will go back for the rest of our party, make a dash, take them prisoners, and force them to tell us where she is.”

This was Frank’s whispered plan, and he was starting off to perform it, when Percy again detained him.

“It is folly to think of such a thing. We are too few to

hope for success if we attack them, and we ought not to complicate matters with the Indians by killing any of them just now, when no troops can possibly be spared to guard the frontiers. Beside, they must know we would follow them, and are doubtless on the watch. Let us go forward boldly, like friends, and see what will come of it."

"And, if we fail?" asked Frank, gloomily.

"Remember we han't no reason, except there an't nowhere else to look, for thinking the girl is here," interrupted one of the party. "More, also, how do we know but she come of her own accord, if she be here? I confess, the more I think on't, it seems to me most likely; for you say she come to your house in a kind of a wanderin', vagrant way. Who knows but she likes that sort of life?"

"Mind what you say of her!" hissed Frank, between his clenched teeth. Then turning to his brother, he added, "Let us understand each other. Suppose Agnes is n't there, what do you propose to do?"

"The only thing we can do is to go back, and try if we can raise a force sufficient to go to the Indian village and negotiate, if possible —"

"Yes, you will stop to negotiate, and negotiate — and, meantime, what will become of Agnes? I am sure these Indians know where she is, and I'll follow 'em to the death, but I'll find out the secret! Heaven forgive me, that I ever thought well of one of them!"

He broke from Percy's cautioning grasp, and rapidly ascended the hill. The others followed silently.

The Indians had eaten their supper, and were lounging about the fire, apparently half asleep, but in reality alert and watchful; for one of them, in creeping through the valley a short time before, had discovered the little party in search of them. As the cautious footsteps approached, each one furtively grasped his weapon, and braced his muscles for a spring; and when the first man stepped within the circle of bushes that formed a screen behind their fire, they sprang up as by a simultaneous movement, and stood ready to meet whatever was to come. Behind them Lawontica leaned against a tree, where the drooping boughs half shaded her face from the firelight. Frank advanced straight towards her. His excited, impetuous manner admitted of no opposition, and the grim band opened to let him pass. The girl raised herself to receive him, and stood erect, graceful, nonchalant. Not the quiver of a nerve betrayed any emotion, as his keen eyes seized upon hers with a concentrated power which seemed as if it would wring the secret from her heart.

“Where is she — where is Agnes?” was the abrupt question.

“Who knows?” was the reply.

“You know — Lawontica, you cannot cheat me! You know where she is!”

The light in her eyes grew prouder and more defiant, but she made no answer. He waited a moment, and then added, with more of supplication in his tone,

“You — you that she liked so well — you that I would have trusted without a doubt — you have stolen her away

from me! Do you know what she is to me? I say it proudly before all these — she is dearer to me than life!”

Still no answer, but the haughty lip curled and writhed in a strange contortion, that might have been of triumph or of pain.

“Speak to me, Lawontica! Tell me, at least, why you have taken her, and what price we must pay to free her. I will coin my blood into gold, but I will pay the price. O, Lawontica, have you forgotten what friends we have been? Have you no pity for either her or me?”

She drew a knife from her belt, and, clutching it firmly, held the point towards him.

“So much!” she said, with a fierce laugh.

He started involuntarily from the sudden gesture, while the cordon of Indians uttered in chorus their emphatic grunt of approval, and echoed the taunting laugh.

Percy and his companions, who had been concealed behind the bushes, now stepped into the light, and, taking this for a signal of attack, the Indians rushed at them, brandishing their tomahawks. They hastily put themselves in a posture of defence, but there were reasons why neither party wished for bloodshed, and a momentary pause ensued, during which Lawontica threw herself between the belligerents. To her Percy addressed himself with an attempt at pacification, but she interrupted him —

“Let me talk now. Why you think me know 'bout Agnes? Why you plague me so? Look! she no here! S'pose me steal her, what me do with her? — what me want

'um steal her for? Ugh! Listen! No more my peoples call white man brother. They dig up the hatchet—it is red—gréat many white mans, his blood wet it. Now you go home, you safe—me no want 'um hurt you. S'pose you come after me, maybe you get killed. Now me done speaking."

She turned back to her seat under the tree, and neither entreaty or expostulation could obtain another word from her; and as the Indian warriors gave no indication of understanding English, and returned only an inexpressive grunt and threatening gestures to the most skilful offer of treaty, no recourse remained but to withdraw and consult together what should next be done.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADVENTURES IN THE FOREST.

HARDLY a word was spoken by any of the party, as they retraced their steps to their own camp. All were disappointed at this result of their search, and most of them ready to decide that the Indians knew nothing of the matter. Yet, to Percy and Frank, Lawontica's manner confirmed instead of lessening suspicion. A long discussion followed before they lay down around the fire to sleep. Finding their neighbors bent upon returning home, the brothers yielded their own wishes, which were for a steady and stealthy pursuit, to the prudent suggestions reminding them of the scanty preparation they had made for a long and dangerous journey.

When they arrived at home, and had described their interview with the Indians, they found Mr. and Mrs. Grey as anxious as themselves for further search; and Percy proceeded at once to Morristown, while Frank went in another direction. His object was to obtain the services of a man who had had considerable experience as a hunter and trader with the Indians. Upon his skill he relied to trace the savages to their

village, and to recover Agnes by stratagem, if force or treaty proved unavailing.

It was on the evening of the fourth day after Agnes' disappearance that Percy, after eating supper with the officers of his mess, at their lodgings in Morristown, walked to the "Freemason's tavern," on the north side of the village green, where Gen. Washington had established his head-quarters. As he passed under the poplars that stood like giant sentinels before the house, he met Major Hoops, who was one of the aids much in the general's confidence, and the frequent bearer of dispatches. In a moment's conversation he imparted the object of this visit, but received little encouragement that it would meet with success; and, with an anxious heart, he was ushered into the apartment where Gen. Washington was then sitting.

The general was in full dress, for he had that day entertained the officers at dinner, and wore the blue and buff which pictures and the patent office have since made so familiar to all Americans. He was busily engaged in writing, as was also a slight, fair young man, who sat at a table on the opposite side of the fire; and, with a brief apology for so doing, Gen. Washington continued his employment until he had finished and sealed the dispatches upon which he was engaged.

Then he turned to his guest, and listened attentively while Percy related concisely what he knew of Agnes and the circumstances attending her loss, requesting permission to march with a sufficient force into the Indian territory, and rescue the missing girl, or satisfy himself she was not there.

When he had finished, the general mused for some time in

silence, his thoughtful, care-laden brow indicating the earnestness with which his mind was working. At length, he said,

“Of one thing I think you may be sure. The party you pursued had not the captive in charge. You were upon the wrong trail.”

“Is that possible? And we wasted so much time!” exclaimed Percy.

“If you had been a little better acquainted with Indian tactics, you would have known that, had they wished to avoid pursuit, they would have covered their trail. My early experience west of the mountains taught me so much,” he added, with a smile.

“But, your excellency, this party was so large that concealment would have been difficult, and they might have trusted to the snow which was falling to hide the track.”

“No. Savages do not trust so lightly. And a much larger party would have been able to go on their way without leaving marks which an inexperienced eye could detect. If this young lady was abducted by the Indians, her captors have taken a different direction.”

“Yet, sir, I think I must be correct in accusing Lawontica. No one else could have had any motive in attempting such an outrage; and we are morally certain Agnes did not leave my father’s house willingly.”

“And what motive could this Indian princess have for causing so strange an accompaniment to her wedding journey?”

Percy hesitated, and then, with a smile, replied, “There is

but one imaginable motive, and this so ridiculous I am half ashamed to name it. I think it has never occurred to my brother, and did not to myself until during our last meeting with Lawontica. If she had been a white woman, I should have said she was jealous of Agnes."

"Ah, that makes the thing more probable," said the general, returning Percy's smile. "And did your brother's conduct warrant such jealousy?"

"Not particularly. But this Indian girl has been in the habit of coming to our house familiarly during some years, and she may have misinterpreted my brother's friendship as the sign of a warmer feeling. We all liked Lawontica. It is hard for us to believe she has been so treacherous."

"What you have said supplies a motive for the deed, as revenge is a virtue with the savage. But the party you followed must have acted only as a decoy, while the real object of pursuit got off safely; and that supposes a degree of cunning beyond the ordinary range of Indian intellect. Their stratagems are usually of the simplest kind, and all laid upon one plan. Once you have mastered one set, the others are but repetitions. Was this Indian girl of quick wit?"

"Yes, sir; more than usually ready to catch at an idea, or follow out a suggestion. She was of a bold, imperious disposition, though not what one would call ill-tempered, except on a few occasions, lately. I cannot think she will be cruel to Agnes, or allow others to be so; and yet, of course, we shall feel great solicitude until we at least know what has happened to her."

“Of course,” replied the general; and his noble face grew shaded and perplexed again, as he sank into a fit of musing, taking up his pen, now and then, to make a few figures, as if he was going through with calculations. Then, looking up with an expression that showed he felt the disappointment he was compelled to inflict, he said,

“You ask for soldiers to go into the Indian territory, and I wish most sincerely it was in my power to detail a company for that service. But, Major Grey, in this, as in so many other enterprises, the ruinous system of short enlistments, which has been persisted in, in spite of my urgent remonstrances, ties my hands. The few troops left me here are being decimated by the small-pox, and, though I have sanguine hopes that the worst is past, and recruits will come in to fill up the army for the spring campaign, at present I have hardly enough to defend this position, if we should be attacked. This is not to be spoken of everywhere, of course. At present we live by making a show of strength. But I think Mr. Hamilton, here, will agree with me that to spare you a force sufficient for your purpose just now would be to risk sacrificing the army and the country to the welfare of an individual.”

At being thus addressed, Alexander Hamilton—for he was the delicate-looking youth busy at the other table—glanced up from his writing, and said, quickly,

“Perhaps I should suggest, what your excellency may have forgotten, that the Tory, Robert Rogers, the captain of the band calling themselves the Queen’s Rangers, — which Gen.

Lee routed last November, you remember, — was detected about the outposts of Gen. Heath's camp, on the Hudson, a few weeks since, disguised as an Indian. He escaped, but is supposed to have his head-quarters somewhere near the Pennsylvania border. Could not something be effected towards his capture by those whose ostensible object should be the recovery of this English girl, and thus the country and the individual both be served ?”

“Don't tempt me, my son,” said Gen. Washington, smiling, with an expression at once sad and pleased. “Your suggestion is valuable, but, if I listen to it, who shall hinder the spies that may report our utter weakness here, and bring upon us the *King's* Rangers from their camp at Brunswick ? My inclinations join with yours in wishing to serve a family that has supplied us with two gallant soldiers ; but, as I said, my hands are tied.”

“You are right, sir,” replied Hamilton, “and Major Grey's known patriotism can be relied upon to console him under this personal disappointment.”

“If I could but raise a company of volunteers, now, and at once rescue Agnes and take that Rogers prisoner, what a brilliant dash it would be !” said Percy, with kindling eyes.

“And what a brilliant episode in the tedious dulness of this winter !” added Hamilton. “My dear sir, take me as a volunteer !”

“Nay, not so. We cannot spare you, and Major Grey will not want a rival to dispute the honors of his achievement. But, should you succeed in raising a company, if arms and

ammunition are wanted, I may help you to them; though they are nearly as hard to obtain and as scarce as men."

The smile faded from the general's lips, as he uttered these last words, more to himself than to his auditors; and Percy took his leave soon after, almost satisfied to be denied, since the denial was accompanied with such assurances of sympathy and regard.

But the raising of a company of volunteers was a thing more easily projected than performed. The actual demands of the war formed a burden so heavy that it was difficult to supply motive sufficient for any extra effort, and a week elapsed before a band of twenty could be collected. Then, a succession of storms, rendering travelling through the forest impracticable, delayed them some days longer. Frank became taciturn and gloomy. His sanguine and genial temper seemed to have deserted him during this trial, and he was heard, more than once, to declare, with a sort of wonder, that, after all, he was *not* the luckiest fellow in the world. In his first expedition to the woods, he had accidentally hurt the hand which had but just healed, and the fever of mind and body affected the wound. It became inflamed and painful, and when at last the party started, he accompanied them with one hand in a sling.

So much time had now been lost that they relinquished their first plan of following the savages to their village. They obtained from Sanoso sufficient knowledge of its locality to enable them to find it, and Lawson, the hunter, who had been in the towns near it, advised that they should take the county

road across to Easton. From thence a bridle-path, easily traced, led through the forest to Wyoming, and along the river to the falls of Wyalusing. Here was a small settlement of whites and friendly Indians, who had chosen to remain when the Moravian mission at Gnadenhutten was broken up, the preceding year. This route, though circuitous, was much easier than to pursue the direct path through a wild, unbroken wilderness. At Wyalusing they left their horses, and, taking advantage of the smooth, frozen bed of the creek, followed it to its source, and then, striking into the woods, proceeded cautiously in an eastern direction. After travelling with much difficulty, for twenty miles, over the hills and through valleys filled with tangled thickets, they reached a stream running to the north. Here they camped for the night, keeping only a very small fire, lest the smoke should betray them to some passing Indian.

The next morning they went on along the bank of the stream. The way was toilsome and precipitous, but they dared not leave the shelter of the trees, for fear of discovery, and after about ten miles it entered a gorge between two mountains. The bed was now one solid sheet of ice, but its curled and uneven surface told how the waters must foam and rush when freed from the stern grasp of winter.

The party were here compelled to climb the mountain, as Lawson was sure they were near the Iroquois villages for which they sought. After some hard work, they came out upon the precipice above the stream. Percy Grey was the foremost man, and a few more steps showed him a pretty

little picture of savage life. The brook here made a sudden turn to the west, and the rocky mountain raised itself like a perpendicular wall on one side, for a hundred feet or more. The upper surface of this ledge rounded out from the belt of forest, a broad, flat rock, more than a rod in width. Below, the stream, which here was narrow and deep, washed the base of the precipice, while on its opposite side lay a strip of intervalle land, where a small village had been located. There were about a dozen huts scattered along the bank, and in the cleared space between them and the opposite mountain stood one larger than the others, which was used for a council-house. The Indians were passing in and out among the huts, and a few children were playing together here and there. The scene was quiet and cheerful, with the morning sunshine glistening upon the snow that floored the valley as with purest marble, and crested every crag and stone, and the broad cones of the fir-trees, with capitals of silver frost-work.

But Percy took one glimpse at the view, and then drew back hastily into the shelter of the forest. A hurried consultation followed. Frank had no doubt this was the place Lawontica had so frequently described to him, but Lawson was quite sure that Tamaque* and Puschiis,† her father, lived at a larger village, on the other side of the mountain. As there was no appearance of any body of warriors here, it was deemed advisable to go to the latter village first, and at least reconnoitre the ground before deciding what should be done.

* The Beaver.

† The Cat.

They knew the great body of the Iroquois had taken up the war-hatchet against the American army; and, although these frontier villages, being inhabited partly by Delawares, had hitherto maintained a neutral position, their pretensions of friendliness were not to be trusted while a man like Rogers was in their midst. Lawson therefore advised the party, of which he was now elected captain, pro tem, to secrete themselves in some safe nook, while he went into the village, as if on an ordinary expedition for collecting peltry.

So long as they remained high up the mountain-side they were comparatively safe; for the hunters seek their game along the sheltered levels and in the valleys, where instinct teaches them to resort, leaving the cold, bleak heights solitary at this season.

Having proceeded further around the mountain, they found a nook where they were screened from the wind; and, not daring to make a fire, they broke down branches and built a sort of hut against the rocks, into which they all huddled, striving to keep warm.

It was nearly noon when Lawson had left them, and, with a hunter's pack upon his back, descended towards the village of Umquabog. This consisted of thirty or forty houses, placed in two rows, parallel to each other, in the broad and pleasant valley which here skirted the mountain. The Iroquois huts were either square or oblong buildings, constructed of bark nailed to a rude frame, made by sticking poles into the ground, and securing them in place by cross-beams lashed along the sides and across the tops. The roof was made by

poles bent in the form of an arch, and fastened on each side to the frame. Over these bark was laid, shaved smooth, and lapped over like large tiles. In the centre of the roof a hole was left as an outlet for the smoke. These dwellings were not often more than eight feet in the highest point, and the walls were but five feet. Where the possessor had some idea of beauty and comfort, they were hung inside with mats or skins, neatly sewed together, making a warm and elegant tapestry; but many of them were destitute of this.

The earthen floor was left to be pounded hard and smooth by the feet of its occupants; beds of boughs, covered with skins, occupied the corners, and in the centre a fire was kept burning. Small openings were often cut in the walls, over which a sliding panel of wood was arranged to admit or exclude the light. The doors were usually one large piece of bark placed outside the wall against a corresponding opening, but sometimes a curtain upon the inside was added.

On one side of the houses, which generally were placed in a row, was the field where the Indian women worked together, cultivating the corn and vegetables used by their families. This spot was enclosed by a fence to keep out the animals; and when the land in any place became too poor to support the inhabitants, the town was removed, *sans ceremonie*, to a richer locality.

Umquabog was one of the few places which had retained its identity through several generations, as the surrounding valleys were very fertile. Between its two rows of huts was a street several rods in width; and when Lawson appeared at

one end of it, a horde of warriors, half-grown boys, squaws, and vagabond whites who were their guests, poured out of the low doors to see the new arrival. At first they were inclined to treat him civilly, and were curious to know what was in his pack. But the chief, Puschiis, with some of the leading warriors, had been talking in their hut with Rogers and his associate, and when these mingled with the crowd hostile looks and words became more frequent.

Lawson was a brave man, and, stepping boldly up to the chief, whom he had formerly known, he told him he had come to buy skins, and, as a token of his good faith, held out a string of wampum. But Puschiis, after regarding him steadily for a moment, threw the wampum at his feet, and, turning his back upon him, went into the house, followed by his warriors.

According to Indian customs, a greater insult than this could not have been offered, and Lawson knew it would be useless to attempt further conversation. The crowd around set up a shout of derision, mingled with yells and cries, that made the place seem like a pandemonium. The hunter turned about, and, facing them with undaunted looks, passed through their midst unmolested, and slowly withdrew in a direction opposite to that by which he entered the village. By so doing he gained an opportunity to look into the huts as he passed, and to satisfy himself that Agnes was not there. He wished also to mislead any who might dog his steps, and it was after sunset before he rejoined his companions in their hiding-place.

They had spent a comfortless day, and the report he brought was not encouraging. It seemed to be folly to think of attacking or surprising Rogers while surrounded by fifty stalwart warriors. They had hoped by some fortunate chance to capture him and make a rapid retreat; but this was plainly impossible, and their own escape from the hostile and drunken horde became a hazardous matter. But Frank urged that they should at least make an attempt at the village on the other side the mountain. Lawson had seen neither Tamaque or Lawontica among the crowd at Umquabog, and he hoped that Agnes was with them in their bridal home. Every moment so large a party remained in the vicinity was indeed perilous; but to return, without one effort to regain the lost, was to make the expedition wholly fruitless, and they readily yielded to his wishes.

The next morning, as soon as there was light enough to move with safety, they left the hut. At first they could hardly move their cramped and chilled limbs; but the exercise of walking gradually restored warmth and energy, and they went on more cheerfully. Yet their motions were cautious and silent, and at times Lawson, whose quick ear detected the faintest sound, made them sink down, as he had taught them, behind rocks and bushes, for concealment; but the chance footsteps were not attracted that way, and they arrived in safety upon the broad, overhanging shelf of rock from whence Percy had first seen the little hamlet of lodges in the vale below.

Two huge boulders rested on the extreme edge of this rock, and, catching the soil at their base, were half covered with

creeping vines, that in summer must have festooned around them with picturesque effect. A large bush had grown up between them, forming a screen, through which the strangers could with safety look down into the very heart of the village.

Between these boulders and the forest that clothed the mountain the rains had washed bare the upper surface of the rock for a space a rod wide and several rods in length. Upon this the tracks they had made the previous day were visible, and beside them were seen the fresh prints of a moccasin. Lawson pointed them out to his companions, saying, "Heaven send these were made in the dark; for if an Indian passed over here yesterday, we are lost!"

"Perhaps all the Indians are not so unfriendly as those at Umquabog," suggested Percy.

"I would n't give much to choose, after what you said about that Injin gal when you saw her. She told you they'd dug up the hatchet, and I reckon she told the truth."

"Is there no place about here where you can be more comfortable than we were yesterday? The air pierces like a knife, up here on the mountain, if one is not exercising. If you know of such a place, it would be best for Frank and I to go directly to this village, and see what we can do by negotiation. Of course, we must abandon the idea of an attack. We had better keep our lives till it would do some good to throw them away."

The hunter thought a moment, and then said, in reply to Percy,

"There is a cave somewhere on this mountain, and, if I

an't mistaken, 't an't far from hereabouts. I think, maybe, I can find it, anyways, if you will wait here a while. But, Major Grey, I an't sure but you'll throw away your lives just as much if you go down there, as if you stood up to be shot at. Something has riled these Injins — that's evident — and 't an't safe to risk 'em."

"You did not mind the risk, and why should we?" said Percy.

"Ah! but the risk is more for you two. I went in trading, and they all knew me. Besides, you two — why, you're all there is left of your family, an't you?" said Lawson, whose rough but generous nature had been touched by the gallant bearing of the brothers.

His words caused a shade to pass over their faces, as they remembered those waiting their return at home, and Frank said, impetuously,

"I will go alone! I shall be ashamed to show myself at home, if I don't succeed in this matter; but you, Percy, must not risk yourself."

"Pooh! what is life to me now?" said Percy, half aloud. The bitter words had escaped unconsciously.

Frank started, and looked at him anxiously. He had been so calm, so thoughtful, so considerate of others, so interested in this affair, that, amid his own anxiety, Frank had forgotten the well-spring of grief whose hidden waters now for a moment overflowed. It was only for a moment. Frank pressed his brother's hand softly, and whispered,

"For the sake of the old folks at home, Percy!"

“Yes,” replied Percy, aloud, in a cheerful tone. “I do not forget them; but there is really little for us to fear. Our friend, here, exaggerates the danger. It may be that Lawontica has not the influence with her tribe we imagine she has; but, if we are not mistaken there, we are safe, though it might not be safe for others to venture into the village. So, if you can find your cave, Mr. Lawson, the sooner you do so the better, for see — the sun is rising.”

“Keep still here, then, till I come back,” said Lawson, and disappeared behind the trees.

His companions concealed themselves as well as they could among the rocks and bushes. The wild spot afforded many a hiding-place, and Frank was fortunate enough to secure one where, by lying flat on the ground, he was screened from observation, and yet could project his head far enough over the cliff to obtain a view into the village.

As the sun rose higher, and darted his beams down into the deep and narrow valley, the doors of the lodges were one after another thrown back, and the inmates came forth to breathe the fresh air. The men soon disappeared again, but the women passed in and out, with arms full of brushwood, and soon a curling smoke from the top of each wigwam told that they were cooking breakfast before the fires where their lords were lounging in lazy dignity. At the furthest point of the village, where the stream that watered the base of the mountain made a sudden turn around a high bank and crossed to the other side of the valley, stood a lodge far superior to the rest in size and in beauty of structure. Frank's attention

had been instinctively fixed upon this, as more likely than any to be Lawontica's home, and he was right in his conjecture. As he watched it, the curtain was lifted, a tall form bowed itself in the low doorway and came out, holding the curtain with one hand, and standing a few moments, as if talking to some one within. Then the lithe, graceful figure of the Indian princess came and stood beside him. Even at that distance, Frank was sure he could not be mistaken; and, as he saw Lawontica, a short time after, engaged in the household duties of the lodge, bringing wood and water, while her husband smoked his pipe at the door, he smiled to contrast her present humility with the arrogance he had once seen her display.

In about an hour Lawson returned. He had found the cave, but informed them that, though the snow around was not tracked, wampum and other articles were hung upon the inside near the entrance, indicating it was sometimes occupied. However, they could not remain in their present position, exposed to discovery by every chance straggler from the village, and it was thought best to resort to the cave, which Lawson reported to be dry and warm. In going there they took the greatest precautions to hide their footsteps, by walking in Indian file each one being careful to step exactly where his predecessor had done; and, as they all wore moccasins, and turned their toes in, as the natives do, a casual observer would have said only one of the tribe had passed that way. Lawson had learned this trick in his past sojournings among the Indians.

They reached the cave unseen. It was about half-way

between the base of the mountain and the place where they had waited, and so far around on its southern slope as to be quite out of the way of people passing between the two villages. The mountain was less precipitous here than on its eastern side, but for a few rods around the mouth of the cave the path lay along a ledge so narrow that they could only maintain a foothold by clinging to the bushes growing in the steep bank above. Fortunately, this ledge was free of snow, as was also the mouth of the cave, which was low, and overhung with vines.

After passing the entrance, they found the cave expanded into a room nearly twenty feet square, and high enough to allow them to stand upright. Its floor was strewed with dead leaves so thickly as to make it probable human hands had brought them there; and the vines, hanging like a curtain over the opening, were matted and woven together, as if human art had assisted nature. From this they concluded that the place was probably inhabited in summer, but in the winter left unoccupied; and thus, though its existence was known, they imagined themselves safe there for a little while.

Leaving their comrades hidden, Frank and Percy descended to the village. It was their intention to keep within the woods until they reached a point opposite Lawontica's lodge, and then cross the stream on the ice, and present themselves at her door before they were seen elsewhere. But, in their ignorance of the path, losing the right direction, they came out opposite the heart of the village, and before retreat among the trees was possible they happened to be seen by some

young men playing foot-ball on the ice. An instant yell told that a dozen Indians were swarming up the mountain after them.

To descend and meet these was the safest way, and the brothers ran swiftly down the precipitous bank, now bare of trees, clinging to the bushes, sliding and jumping with an agility that eluded their pursuers, and brought them safe upon the ice before the young Indians had climbed half-way to the spot where they were first seen. But the older warriors had taken the alarm, and, uncertain what the yells resounding through the air might mean, they grasped gun and tomahawk, and ran to the place whence the noise proceeded. Six of them stood ready to surround and seize the two young men the moment their feet landed on the level floor of the stream. The youths, who had gone but little way, returned, and in another moment Percy and Frank found themselves in the centre of a group of whooping savages, whose exulting and furious gestures menaced instant death.

At this moment all presence of mind deserted them, and they made one vain, frantic effort to escape. They were knocked down, their arms bound, and before they could recover their senses fully their captors had borne them in triumph to the village.

A fire had just been built in the council-house, around which the chiefs had met to consider certain belts of wampum sent them the preceding day from Onondaga, the principal town among the Six Nations. To this they now repaired, leaving the prisoners for the present at the mercy of the

younger part of the community. Among these was a tall, powerful warrior, named Shamokin, the war-captain of his tribe, and a deadly foe of the white race.

The captives had been placed in a hut on the margin of the stream, and Shamokin, standing at its entrance, harangued the assembled crowd with great fluency. Percy and Frank could not understand his dialect, but the gestures and scalp-yells that replied to him at every pause told his speech boded no good to them. They looked in vain for Lawontica, who seemed to be the only one of all the village absent from the spot, and their inquiries elicited no satisfactory answer.

At length, after much noise and confusion, Shamokin and two others entered the hut and seized them, as if to drag them out among the crowd. Frank's wound disabled him, but Percy was strong of limb, and had managed to free his arms from their bonds. Without much difficulty he shook off his antagonist, and exclaimed, in the broken English the natives recognized more readily than a purer vernacular,

“Stop! What for you pull me and my brother? We men of peace. We come smoke with you. What for you treat us so?”

He raised himself to his full height as he spoke, and his cool, determined bearing had the effect he intended upon those present. Several were looking in at the door, and responded with a grunt of admiration. He had calculated that if they did not understand the words, his manner would command some degree of respect; but Shamokin responded, in tolerable English,

“Good! White man brave. No cry like a woman. No run away. Come, then. Walk.”

He stood aside and motioned Percy to go out, and the Indian who had seized Frank allowed him the same grace. But Percy said,

“Walk where? We come to see Lawontica. She married to very great chief. We bring her present. We want to see her.”

“Indian — white man no brother now — no take presents. The chief’s daughter she tell you we dig up the hatchet. You come after us, sartin you die. Come, then. You brave man, — she say so. You no ’fraid.”

The Indian said this with a pleased and complimentary air, as if congratulating both himself and Percy on their mutual appreciation of each other.

“I am not afraid,” said Percy. “But before you kill me you must let me see Lawontica. We very much her friend, and we have something to tell her from Sanoso.”

“You no see her — she no see you,” replied Shamokin, whom Percy supposed to have been with Lawontica when she uttered the words he had quoted, and to possess her confidence.

“Why will she not see us?” he asked, with greater sinking of the heart than he had known before.

“She know you here. Why she no come? She no want to see you.”

An impatient yell from the group without interrupted the conversation, and the Indian added, with a significant gesture,

“Go now. You brave man. Walk!”

They were brave men, but it could be pardoned if at that moment their hearts fluttered a little, as they went out from the close cabin under the bright sky, that might be witness not of death alone, but of insult and torture. Whatever they might have felt, neither betrayed by faltering step or unsteady gaze the secret agitation, the rapid glancing back of memory over each object that had claimed interest or sympathy through their lives, the shuddering glance forward at the appalling danger menacing them. The savages looked with delight at their calm faces. To kill such enemies, was to rejoice the spirits of their ancestors in the happy hunting-grounds.

When they had walked a few paces in silence, Frank said, in a low tone, to his brother, whose arm was linked in his,

“If they really mean to kill us, would it not be better to snatch their tomahawks and defend ourselves to the last?”

“If it can be done, we’ll do it. Do you suppose Lawontica really does not mean to interfere in our behalf?”

“I can’t tell; she’s incomprehensible to me,” replied Frank, impatiently.

“Then we must watch our chance, and depend upon ourselves. They won’t probably finish us this morning, at any rate.”

Here the Indians became suspicious, and forced them apart. The crowd proceeded onward until they reached a tree standing alone, not many rods distant from the council-house. Its branches had been chopped off for twenty feet from the

ground, and various marks upon its trunk showed that it had often been used for the purpose to which it was now devoted.

Percy was fastened to this tree, while Frank, guarded by two young men, with his arms securely bound, was made to sit near and look at the sport. The Indians divided into two equal parties, and commenced playing a match-game at throwing the tomahawk. The bright missiles whizzed through the air, first on one side, and then on the other; and as the person who hit nearest without cutting the prisoner claimed the victory for his party, strong nerves were required to endure the ordeal unmoved.

The players were skilled in the art, and there was little danger of a serious wound, until excitement and rivalry began to make them reckless. The steel quivered in the tree nearer and nearer, cutting the hair and clothing, and at last grazed Percy's cheek, and clipped a bit from his ear.

As they saw the blood trickle down, there was a shout, and then a pause in the play. They reckoned up the cuts on the tree, and then unbound Percy, and, placing Frank in the same position, were dividing to begin a new game, when Lawontica suddenly appeared among them.

She placed herself between Frank and his tormentors, and commenced a rapid and energetic remonstrance in their native tongue. She was received with scowls and looks of impatience; for the opinion of a young woman, albeit she was a princess, was held in low estimation with these lordly denizens of the forest. Her place was in the lodge, her proper conduct silence and humility, her "*sphere*" the accomplish-

ment of all the labor she was able to perform. Her admirer or her husband might be swayed by her wishes, but such weakness of human nature was never suffered to be known in public.

Lawontica had an ambition to change all this, and to acquire the influence and respect she had seen white women possess. When they motioned her aside, and bade her no longer interrupt their game, she cast upon them a glance of scorn, and, turning quickly, snatched a tomahawk and cut the withes that bound Frank to the tree. It was to him an unimaginable relief, for they had kept his hand in torture. As she released him, she said, rapidly,

“No you run. Sartin they catch you now. Wait till night.”

He took the hint, and made no effort to escape. Indeed, the attempt would have been fatal, for, in an instant, the crowd uttered the scalp-yell, and closed around the tree.

Lawontica kept firm hold of Frank, and, calling them to follow, drew him slowly towards the house where Tamaque and six other chiefs sat around the council-fire. They had not been moved from their deliberations by all the noise without. They were divided in opinion with regard to the propriety of the war in which they were invited to join; and some of them, of whom Tamaque was leader, had produced the belt of peace, the sign of former treaties of amity, while others held up the war-belt of black wampum, in which the figure of a hatchet had been worked in red. These belts, and some of less importance, lay on the ground, and Tamaque had

just concluded his speech, when the crowd of youths gathered around the door, and Lawontica entered with her captive. Shamokin, being a war-captain, did not join the deliberations of the chiefs; but their council was open to the audience of any, and he now took a seat behind one of those most in favor of fighting.

After a few moments of silence, in accordance with Indian etiquette, Lawontica drew nearer, and began her address in a quiet tone, which grew more earnest as she proceeded. Her eyes flashed and her cheeks glowed with the excitement of her unwonted situation, but her manner was calm and grave, as became the dignity she had assumed. Translated into English, her speech was this :

“ My grandfather*, why do you let the young men do a foolish thing? Listen to your granddaughter. She has wisdom, though there is no snow in her hair. She does not laugh and talk with the silly women. The little birds do not fill her ears with songs. She sits by the fire all day and hears the great chief talk, and her heart is full of wisdom at his words. But the young men are foolish. Your granddaughter knows these two men. They are great chiefs among the white men. They are friends to the Indian. You have treated them like enemies, but they are friends, and, in token of this, I give you this string of wampum.”

She held out the string of wampum as she spoke, pretending to take it from Frank and present it to the chiefs; but no hand was held out to receive it. The peace-party was in the

* The Indians always used the singular number in their speeches.

minority, and Tamaque, its leader, being her husband, would not seem to be so much under her influence as to yield to her words. His very heart glowed with delight at her beauty. She seemed to illumine the dim hut with the radiance of her eyes, lustrous beneath calm brows, and the shining masses of her jet-black hair, sweeping down from the erect, queenly head. Yet his face assumed a stern expression, and he answered, after an interval of silence,

“The men are spies. One of them was at Umquabog, yesterday. They are counting the number of our warriors. They have smooth faces, but their heart is the heart of a wolf.”

“Then the young men are like snakes. They would swallow their prey whole. Let them chew it, and see how sweet it is!” said Lawontica, changing her plan of entreaty, after a moment of thought. “If the two white chiefs are spies, let them die, but let them not suffer the shame of dying meanly by the blunder of the most unskilful thrower. Will not the white man laugh at my grandfather? Will they not say he does not know how to treat a brave foe? Why should my grandfather fear to keep his enemy alive until he can find out the truth? Perhaps a bird has been singing a foolish song in his ear. Will he call a friend an enemy that he may kill him? Let the white chiefs be unbound, and let the women bring them food, that their hearts may be strong. Let the great chief, let Puschis be sent for, and then let my grandfather sit around the council-fire, and whatever he says, it is good.”

Again she held out the string of wampum, with which the Indian always concludes any important address; and the power of her eloquence was seen, as an old chief, the head man of the village, took it from her hand and answered,

“The words of my daughter are good. Let the white chiefs have food to eat.”

This in effect was an order remanding the prisoners to their hut for the present. The authority of an Indian chief was in reality merely nominal, except where circumstances gave him a personal influence over his followers. The most entire liberty of action and speech was guarded by each individual with a jealousy that admitted of no attempt at coercion. But there were certain customs which long usage had sanctioned, and as this tribe had not actually taken up the war-hatchet, it was considered that the captain had gone a little beyond his prerogative in allowing the prisoners' lives to be hazarded without first consulting the chiefs. Therefore no opposition was made when Lawontica led forth the captives into the open air, but they were accompanied by few of the crowd except those who went to guard them. Most of the young men stayed to hear the deliberations that followed, in the council-house.

Now that the immediate danger was past, Lawontica left them abruptly, as soon as they were outside the door. They supposed she would soon return, and watched for her all the afternoon in vain. She sent them food, but gave no heed to the messages and requests they sent her. They had been conducted to a small hut, so low they could scarcely stand in it,

and an old squaw brought them parched corn and venison. They were then bound tightly, to prevent escape, and left without guard, except the women and young boys whose curiosity kept them about the door.

During the afternoon several persons arrived from the other village, among whom were Puschis and his friend Rogers. They were received with gravity and decorum by the chiefs; but the rum, which was a favorite beverage at these councils, was beginning to take effect. A cruel, rancorous spirit ruled the assembly. Tamaque, who seldom drank, because, as he said, "he did not want to drown his *think*," was blinded and led astray by a spirit even more dangerous. Knowing his influence with the others, and his pacific disposition, Shamokin, who was his near relative, managed to utter a whisper that set his heart on fire.

"Tamaque is a great chief," he said, "but a woman's hand is over his eyes. He cannot see his wife's lover when he comes to find his lodge."

There was no reply, but the cunning savage with that word had given the clue to a whole maze of mysteries which had perplexed his unsuspecting relative, and roused a jealousy boundless as his former trust in Lawontica. He remained silent for nearly an hour, that he might not betray his motive even to the one who suggested it; and then, as if convinced by the speeches of the others, suddenly seized the war-belt and placed it in Shamokin's hand, saying, briefly,

"I give you the two men, to make soup of."

The fearful words, indicating torture and death to the cap-

tives, and war against their nation, were received with two terrific yells, which were echoed by those in the street. The sound startled Percy from an uneasy slumber, into which he had fallen from sheer fatigue. It was now nearly dark outdoors, and quite so in their low hut, destitute of a fire or light.

“How like fiends the creatures scream!” said he. “What do you suppose that means?”

“I don’t care much what it means. I wish they’d tomahawk me on the spot, for this cord round my hand puts me in perfect misery!” replied Frank, with an irrepressible groan.

“I can imagine it, for my own hands are not in the most comfortable plight. I say, Frank, Agnes must be here, or Lawontica would not avoid us so.”

“She means to manage our escape, somehow,” replied Frank, more cheerfully, “and that may be one reason she don’t want to be seen here in the daytime. She said, ‘wait till to-night!’”

At that moment a figure darkened the doorway, with one bound stood at Percy’s side, thrust into his hand a knife, and as suddenly withdrew. His fettered and benumbed fingers let the knife fall; but it was well he did, for the next instant a torch-light flashed into the hut, and he had barely time to turn over, so as to hide it beneath him, when Shamokin entered, followed by several others. The council had been dissolved in drunken disorder.

Two or three hours of tumult and confusion ensued; but, except sundry blows and kicks, and numberless taunts and

pantomime scalpings, the prisoners were unmolested in the hut. The bitter doom reserved for them on the morrow saved them through the perils of that hour. But as there were always two or three present, and the torches lighted the narrow space, Percy had no opportunity to tell Frank of the means of escape placed in his power.

As night advanced the noises gradually ceased, and the crowd, wearied with excitement, dispersed to sleep off the effect of their potations. The prisoners had calculated upon that strange oversight of Indian war-tactics which made them neglect to keep a watch, and thus rendered surprises and escapes comparatively easy. Thus, notwithstanding their peril from the drunken mob, they had never lost hope; for, if their own efforts failed, it was most probable some one of their party had managed to ascertain their situation, and would relieve them during the night. They knew also the effect which a cool and determined bearing has upon the savage, and, seeing their hostility, had refrained from any complaint or appeal to compassion.

At length they were left alone with Shamokin, who seemed to appoint himself their jailer. He examined the cords which bound their limbs, and smiled grimly to see that their uneasy movements had not loosened the knots. He had great respect for their silence and fortitude, but would have scorned himself for one emotion of pity; and, leaving them in their comfortless position, he closed the door with a piece of bark, and lay down against it.

Perfect quiet succeeded. Shamokin considered his pris-

oners safe, and composed himself to sleep. When his deep, sonorous breathing filled the hut, Frank whispered to his brother,

“Now, if we only had a knife, we might manage to get free. They emptied my pockets —”

“Hush! There is a knife here — if I can get hold of it.”

“Did Lawontica bring it?”

“I suppose so — I could n’t see her face. She came and went like a flash.”

“Can you find the knife?”

“I have it. Hush! the Indian stirs!”

They listened breathlessly, but he only muttered a few words in his sleep. After many trials, Percy managed, with his hands tied behind him, to place the knife in such a position as to cut the cord around his wrists. He cared little at that moment for the deep gash he gave himself in so doing. Having freed his own limbs, he could easily free his brother.

“Now for escape!” said Frank; “but, O, Percy, must we go, after all this, without knowing what has become of Agnes?”

“It looks so now. Have you noticed that, all day, no one has seemed to know what we meant when we inquired for her? Can it be she is n’t here?”

“I’ve a good will to wait, at all hazards, and see if I can’t see Lawontica, to-morrow.”

“Nonsense! Be thankful if you can save yourself. You can do her no good by staying.”

“Go it, then! Let’s make a dash, and get out of this.”

“Wait,” said Percy, in a low whisper. “We must make surer work than that, or the whole horde of drunken wretches will be after us in five minutes. I’m sorry for Shamokin, but he must die.”

He moved slowly away. The space was not more than ten feet wide, but to his excited, shuddering nerves it seemed an endless distance. The extreme caution he was obliged to take gave him time to realize his situation; in utter darkness, creeping with but one small weapon to find an enemy whose tomahawk would cleave his brain the next instant, if an unwary movement waked him too soon, or if the first blow was not fatal.

Drawing near with slow and painful care, pausing if the Indian stirred or checked his breathing, and guided only by that sound, at length his hand touched Shamokin’s head. It sent a thrill through him like an electric shock, and he hushed his very breath to listen; but the sleeper did not move. Avoiding contact, he moved a little, and bent down his head until his ear was over the mouth; then lower and lower, until he thought he detected the full, strong heart-beat. His arm trembled. He had been in the wildest strife of battle unmoved; but this, though no less necessary to self-defence, seemed like deliberate murder. His resolution wavered, his hand grew unsteady, and the point of the knife touched the Indian’s breast.

At the touch he moved — he waked. Frank heard a half-cry, and then a dull sound like a struggle on the earth. Then all was still.

In a moment Percy's voice, low and hoarse, called "Come," and he groped around the wall to the open door.

It was a cloudy night, and moonless, but the snow seemed to gleam with a dull, phosphorescent light, and they could distinguish the outline of the valley, with its overhanging mountains. The lodges were all shut and silent, and no person was visible. Without exchanging a word, they passed cautiously and swiftly through the village towards the stream.

Just as they stood under the shadow of its bank, they saw dark forms emerge from the forest, and creep down the bare, steep path opposite.

"It is Lawson and the others," said Frank. "I wonder they did n't come sooner. You had a hazardous time there in the dark, Percy."

"Don't speak of it! Ugh! I feel as if I had been having the nightmare."

They ran across the ice. Those coming down the mountain saw them, and stopped on the edge of the stream. A brief consultation followed.

Lawson, becoming alarmed at their long absence, had left the cave and crept through the woods to a point from whence he could look into the village, and thus gained a pretty accurate idea of their situation.

"I saw the crowd peering in the door, there, as if you was two wild beasts in a menagerie," he said to Percy, "and I went back and told the boys we must get you out o' that in no time. How did you get clear?"

Percy briefly related the particulars of their capture and escape.

“That Shamokin’s dead, is he? He’s a varmint! Lucky you killed him, for now we’re sure o’ some hours’ start of ’em. Our lives depends on our legs. No use to hide the trail now. There’ll be forty of ’em arter us in the morning, and we better take straight up stream on the ice. We can do it in no time. The snow an’t deep. Let’s keep together all we can; but, if we get parted, ’t an’t no use looking for each other in the woods. Every man must look out for himself— and God help us all!”

He uttered this last sentence reverently, and a low “amen” responded from more than one of his hearers. The peril surrounding them gave earnestness to the petition. No time could be lost, and, without further parley, they set off at a brisk pace, which, before daylight, brought them to the head of the stream. Pausing long enough to swallow their last remnants of food, and then divesting themselves of all superfluous clothing and whatever might impede their flight, they plunged into the forest.

Having traversed this route so recently, they were able to find their way readily, and the paths they had made in coming aided their return. But many times through the day the wind bore to them the sound of voices yelling and shouting, and, near nightfall, the foremost of their pursuers came within sight, as they were crossing a small pond, and fired at them. One man was slightly wounded; but his injury was avenged,

for Lawson turned and took deliberate aim, and his shots never failed.

The Indians who came after paused at seeing the dead body of their companion, and thus time was again gained for the fugitives, who succeeded in reaching the banks of Wyalusing Creek soon after dark. They dared not make a fire, lest it should betray them; but took turns in watching each other through brief intervals of sleep, and in walking about to keep from freezing, for the night was very cold.

Thus partially rested, they resumed their flight with the earliest gray of dawn. Once again the Indians overtook them, and shots were exchanged. No one of their party was wounded, but they fancied their own rifles had more effect, for the savages withdrew, bearing off one of their number, and they reached Wyalusing that afternoon in safety.

Here they remained a day, to take the rest they so much needed after their hard and useless journey. Their chagrin and disappointment were bitter, but they put the best face possible upon the adventure, and found some consolation in recounting the dangers they had escaped.

But the momentous question of Agnes' disappearance remained involved in a mystery as dark as ever. Frank wished to remain at Wyalusing and wait for an opportunity to return to the vicinity, and in some way obtain an interview with Lawontica. But his hand, through the hardship and neglect of so long a time, had become dangerously inflamed, and Percy insisted he should accompany the party home and obtain the care he needed. They were two days

accomplishing the remainder of the journey, and when they reached Morristown the inflammation had assumed a malignant type. The immediate amputation of two fingers was necessary, and weeks of fever and pain elapsed before the wound was safely healed, and his usual health restored.

Meantime what had become of the wanderer ?

CHAPTER XVII.

AN INDIAN MONODY.

THE evening before Agnes left the farm-house, Sanoso and her grandchild sat within their wigwam, brooding over the fire. Its uncertain glimmer, rising and sinking, revealed fitfully their faces, and the simple garniture of their dwelling. Aided by her white neighbors, Sanoso had constructed a rude chimney of stones, which kept the cabin free from smoke; and all her arrangements showed the same unusual degree of neatness and comfort. On either side of the chimney was a narrow bed of boughs, covered by deer-skins finely dressed, and the one occupied by Lawontica was screened from observation by a curtain. Over the fireplace hung a few cooking utensils, and the wooden bowls and plates, skilfully carved and smoothed, from which they ate their food.

The low walls were covered partly with skins, and partly with a patch-work of woollen and cotton cloth, tastefully arranged in figures. The earthen floor was carpeted, except in a half-circle before the fire, by an elastic matting of dried pine-leaves, thickly strewn, and woven together by constant use. The only furniture was a bench, that served by turns

for seat or table, and a few stools of rude manufacture. There was no window, the hut being lighted only by the door, over which now a heavy curtain was dropped, and fastened by a bag of sand laid across the threshold.

Lawontica leaned forward, with her elbow on her knees, her hands supporting her chin, and the ends of her fingers pressed hard against the white teeth gleaming through her half-parted lips. Her expression was moody and sullen, but without excitement; and she had retained this attitude a long time without motion of limb or feature.

Sitting in the opposite corner, Sanoso silently smoked her pipe, and cast furtive glances towards her child. At length, assuming the same position, and gazing into the coals, she muttered, as if talking to herself,

“Is Sanoso deaf? She is an old woman, and her ears grow dull. No one speaks to her. Once she was wise. Now she knows nothing. Sanoso may go sleep. Lawontica does not need her.”

No one would have supposed from the girl's unmoved face that these low-breathed syllables of her native tongue had reached her ear. Neither did Sanoso look towards her, or seem to expect any reply, but continued to smoke in silence.

After some time, she spoke again.

“Once the heart of my child lay close to the ear of Sanoso. When it cried, she heard it; when it was hurt, she medicined it. Now Sanoso listens, but it says nothing. Lawontica hides it from Sanoso, — hides it from the poor old woman.”

“Sanoso is foolish,” was the reply, in a hard tone, through

the clenched teeth. "Lawontica is a woman now. She has no heart."

Sanoso took the pipe from her mouth, and said, sharply, "She is no woman!—she is maddoes!* She throws sharp quills at the hand that strokes her!"

The girl lifted herself up, resentful at this comparison. Her eyes kindled, and her dark cheek flushed.

"Lawontica is a chief's daughter," she said, proudly. "She will go back to her tribe. She will throw ashes behind her when she leaves the lodge,† and Sanoso will see her no more. Sanoso has smoked too long with the white man. She has forgotten her people."

The fire blazed up at this moment, showing each face to the other, and a pang shot through both hearts at the emotion thus revealed.

"Listen!" said Sanoso. "Many winters ago, Sanoso was a handsome young woman. The red cranberry was not so red as her lips, the brown oak-leaf when the frost had touched it was not so smooth and glossy as her skin, the shining black pebbles in the brook were not so bright as her eyes. Then many braves brought presents to her wigwam, and the summer days were long—the Sèwan—the summer days, when her heart was merry.

"It was here she lived,—on this hillside, beneath these trees,—and the homes of the Unami,‡ her people, were all

* A hedgehog.

† To throw ashes at departing, was to take a vow never to return.

‡ The principal tribe among the Delaware Indians.

around. Then Kobeetsha, the beaver-heart, the wise man, the great warrior, was her husband, and the girls of her tribe envied her. They called her Comuchnolè, the happy. Ah, the summer days were long — the Sèwan — the summer days, when the pappoose played round her feet, and made the wigwam glad.

“Then the white man come nearer, nearer, little nearer, and cut down the trees, and spoil the hunting-ground. Then my people dig up the hatchet, and paint it red. But Kobeetsha say, No. White man too big. Why should the Lennilenape* fight too much, and be killed? Much better they sell their land, and go join their brothers, the Monseys, among the mountains, and their uncles, the Iroquois. It is good. All my people they go off, — they leave the pleasant valleys, and the hillsides where the summer days were long.

“Ahkie! † it was the moon of storms, and the fever seized Ojaneri. ‡ Very sick she lay in the lodge, and Kobeetsha went over the great river to get the famous medicine-man; but he came back no more. In the dark night of storms did the great river swallow his canoe, or did the bad white man shoot him, or the treacherous Indian kill him? Who knows? He came back no more!

“But the child lived. She grew. When she was young girl — ahkie! too young to be married — the great chief Puschis saw her, and she went with him to his lodge. Then Sanoso come away. There was no room for her in the wig-

* Lennilenape — the native name for the inhabitants of this country, called *Indians* by the whites.

† Alas.

‡ Ojaneri — the beautiful.

wam where the great chief's mother sat by the fire. Sanoso come away to the pleasant valley, and the hillside where the summer days were long — the Sèwan — the summer days, when she was happy.

“Then the white man very good to her. Help build the wigwam, give her plenty to eat. Sanoso very glad she come. But one day she made baskets by the door, and, quick! she heard a sound. Was it the west wind in the branches, talking to the leaves? Was it the loon crying to the rain-cloud? Who can tell? There was no one near! ‘Rise up! hasten!’ it said, ‘for the great chief has a daughter, but no wife!’

“The voice spoke true. Ahkie, ahkie! the bitter day, the bitter winter day! The voice spoke true. She was gone! Three days she had been on the journey to the spirit-land. She was gone, my only one, — my Sewéalloca, — my morning star!

“But the great chief had a daughter. Who lifted the crying little one, and carried it till it could walk alone? Who staid many moons for its sake among a strange people, where all the people of her tribe were scattered; among the black mountains, away from the pleasant valleys, and the hillside where the summer days were long? Maybe Sanoso did it! — the old woman, the foolish woman! Lawontica will throw ashes at her when she leaves the lodge!”

She ceased abruptly, and resumed her pipe, without casting another glance at her grandchild. It was no new story she told, but Lawontica could not hear it unmoved. She rose slowly from her seat, and said, in a tone of apology,

“ You called me weisis, — maddoes.”*

Sanoso deigned no reply. Lawontica's straight figure swayed a moment with the irresolution and hesitation she felt, and then, throwing herself upon the floor, she laid her head upon the old woman's knee, and, looking up into her face, said, penitently, “ Muscain — melin ! ” †

The grandmother stroked her silken hair caressingly, and she knew she was forgiven. Nothing more was said, and after she had remained a little while in this position she arose, and, wrapping herself in a blanket, went to the door and pulled aside the curtain. Again turning abruptly to her companion, she said, in a rapid manner, as if forcing herself to speak,

“ Listen, Onūrha. ‡ Lawontica is the great chief's daughter. She is a woman. She must be married. Tamaque is a brave warrior, he is a wise chief. He asks her to go to his lodge. Puschiiis, the great chief, says it is good. She will go.”

Sanoso started slightly as she heard this; but the expression of her face indicated pleasure rather than pain, and she answered, without any appearance of surprise,

“ When will my daughter go ? ”

Lawontica's breath came short and hard. “ When the sun rises Tamaque comes to the lodge. Lawontica goes back with him.”

Sanoso did not pause in her smoking, or lift her eyes from the ground, but her voice trembled slightly as she asked,

* Beast, hedgehog. † I am sorry — forgive me. ‡ My mother.

“And for this is my daughter sad? For this does she say she has no heart?”

“Did I say so? It was Grosquagin, a foolish word. It is gone. Lawontica will be very happy. Sanoso shall sit by her fire when she is old, and the children shall bring her meat.”

“Ahkie, no!” answered the old squaw, shaking her head, sadly. “My child shall go with Tamaque, for the great chief says so, and it is good. But the heart of Sanoso stays in the wigwam on the hillside. The trees in the pleasant valley know her better than the people of her tribe. The white man give her more than her own brother. She will stay here. One day while she sits by the fire in the wigwam, Angloagan* will come in at the door.”

As she was speaking, Lawontica became abstracted and uneasy. She stood as if listening intently for some sound out of doors, and, without replying to Sanoso, suddenly left the hut. In a few moments she returned, and said, abruptly,

“The moon is bright — I will walk. When the stars set I will come again.”

Sanoso nodded, and she went out again, dropping the curtain behind her. Her grandmother followed her to the door, and, looking out stealthily, saw her descend the hill. When she reached the copse near the spring, a tall warrior, with nodding plumes upon his head, came forward to meet her. A short conversation ensued, and then they walked away together in the path leading to Mr. Grey's farm.

* Death.

Sanoso chuckled low to herself, and, muttering and laughing with a strange excitement, went back to her pipe and her seat by the fire. Here she remained a long time, a weird, lonely figure, crouching over the dying embers, talking and shaking her old head, as the feeble, broken words fell from her lips unconsciously. Then, lying down upon her couch of skins, she wrapped herself in a blanket, throwing one corner over her face, and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROUD BEAUTY A BRIDE.

AGNES' bed-room at the farm opened from the parlor, or "fore-room," seldom used by the family during winter. A similar bed-room, adjoining the "keeping-room," served Mr. and Mrs. Grey for a dormitory, and "the boys" slept up stairs in a chamber over them. Agnes was thus in some degree isolated; but she liked the seclusion of her apartment, and had not a thought of fear with regard to its lonely position.

On the evening after her conversation with Frank, she sat a long time by the window, when the household had separated for the night, looking out dreamily upon the wastes of snow, lit by the dazzling moonbeams. Around them the forest seemed to stand like a wall, black and lofty, shutting in the solitary dwelling and its occupants from all communion with the world. Thus dark, mysterious, impenetrable, seemed the wall which circumstances had built around her. She felt too weak to struggle through it, too timid to brave its terrors; and yet she could no longer remain in this one bright spot, this pleasant home where she had rested. The very love which

had met her there warned her thence, lest she should unwittingly give trouble in return for kindness; and that was a possibility her generous spirit could not endure. Wearied, perplexed, and chilled, at length she sought her bed, and fell into a light slumber.

She was aroused by a hand laid softly on her arm. The curtain had been put back from the window, and, though clouds were gathering over the sky, she could dimly distinguish the figure beside her.

It was Lawontica, who placed her finger on her lips, and uttered a low "hist," as Agnes was about to speak.

"What is it? Is any one ill? Does any one want me?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Me hear 'um strange noise. Get up, quick. Maybe somebody come," said Lawontica.

"What can it be? — why don't you call Frank, or Mr. Grey?" exclaimed Agnes, in a tone of alarm. "It may be the Tories, and they will break into the house."

"Why you no get up, then, quick? S'pose bad mans come, very much you want 'um be dressed."

"That's true; but do go call Mr. Grey. I'm frightened!" said Agnes' jumping up and hurrying on her clothes. The Indian girl assisted her, but seemed anxious to make no noise, and to Agnes' continued urging replied, evasively,

"Guess we no wake 'um yet. May be, only — what you call 'um — rat! Then he laugh at me."

“O, nonsense! If some one is coming, he must be waked. I’ll call him, myself.”

As she sprang to the door for this purpose, the Indian girl seized her by the arm, almost rudely, and, with her hand over the half-open lips, said,

“No, no! No speak ’um loud. Somebody hear. Fix your clothes, quick. Maybe you call him then.”

Her manner was so strangely violent, that Agnes made no further opposition, although she wondered greatly what it could mean. Her dress was arranged as rapidly as her trembling fingers would allow, and then, as she turned to go into the kitchen, Lawontica snatched a large shawl from a chair near the bed, and threw it over her shoulders.

“What’s that for?” asked Agnes.

“Maybe you cold out there,” was the reply.

“Is the fire all out, in the kitchen?”

“Hush!” interrupted her companion. “You no hear ’um noise?”

They stood still and listened, but not a whisper broke the silence, and Lawontica, grasping Agnes’ arm, in an eager, excited manner, walked close beside her as they crossed the parlor; but when they reached the door opening into the front entry, she pushed her back a little, and whispered,

“You stay here, minute. Me go first and see. Maybe somebody there. When me call, then you come.”

Agnes, timid and unsuspecting, was glad to comply, and remained there until she heard the click of the door-latch, and Lawontica’s voice speaking her name in a loud whisper.

She took one or two steps forward into the dark passage. Something seized her shoulders with a grasp like a vice, and her involuntary scream of terror was stifled by a hand pressed tightly upon her mouth. A large cloth was thrown over her head and arms, she was lifted from the floor, and borne rapidly away. The front door had been opened and shut noiselessly, and through it her captors fled. After a few struggles she lay still, and so lifeless that upon reaching the wood they paused behind the barricade of fallen trees, and removed the cloth from her head. Snow was beginning to fall, and the moon was hidden, but there was light enough left to show that she had fainted.

The Indian who carried her gave a grunt of satisfaction, and, arranging the covering so as to expose her face, transferred her to the arms of his companion, and they hastened on. The cold air soon revived her, but returning consciousness brought with it such paralyzing fright, that they had gone some distance before she thought of screaming for aid. Then she sent forth shriek after shriek; but it was too late, and the cries were soon stopped by a choking grasp upon her throat. They were now in the thick, dark forest. Instinct must have guided her captors, for there was no path and no light to direct them; yet they went on without much delay, alternately carrying her in their arms. Her slight form, wasted by anxiety and illness, was not a heavy burden for these hardy men while she lay passive in their arms; and when she struggled they found means to quiet her.

At length a faint gleam, spreading and brightening through

the murky air, announced the end of that long, dreadful night. When the dawn had so far advanced as to enable Agnes to distinguish objects about her, the Indians halted, selected with some care a dry place in a copse of low, spreading firs, and motioned for her to sit down.

She obeyed, wrapping herself in the woollen cloth they had thrown over her, for she was shivering with cold. They then kindled a fire, and, while resting themselves on the ground before it, one of them took a few cakes, made of pounded corn, from a greasy pouch hanging at his side. He gave some to his companion, who ate them with a relish, and laid the remainder upon Agnes' lap, saying, emphatically, "Eat."

She could not swallow the unpalatable food, and the Indian frowned as if he was displeased, as he watched her frightened efforts to do so. Turning from her, he said a few words to his companion, who appeared to respect his authority; and then, rising, stood before his captive, with an aspect so stern that her terror increased. She clasped her hands with an involuntary appeal for mercy. He smiled grimly to see the impression he had made, and said, in broken English,

"Me go way now. You no move 'um out this tree, then he no hurt you. You move 'um, make 'um noise —" He finished the sentence by snatching the tomahawk from his belt, and, giving it a whirl, made a pass at her, as if he would have buried it in her forehead.

Agnes shrank back with a stifled cry, and cowered at his feet, mute and trembling. He saw she understood his meaning, and, muttering some indistinct, scornful words, he

strode off through the forest, and was speedily out of sight. Exhausted and despairing, she made no attempt to excite compassion in the savage who remained to guard her, but, with her head bowed on her knees, crouched before the fire, and yielded herself, in utter helplessness, to the thought of what her fate might be.

After two or three hours, the plumed and painted warrior who had first seized her appeared at the opening of the copse, where his comrade stood watching, and an earnest conversation followed; after which he went away again, and his companion, approaching Agnes, signed to her to arise and resume her journey.

She dared not refuse, for death was the alternative; and bitterly as she had wearied of life, her timid nature could not brave a fate so dreadful. Yet her steps were feeble, and their progress necessarily so slow, that her guide became very impatient, and several times caught her in his arms and carried her for some distance, in the rapid trotting pace peculiar to the Indian. When he placed her again upon her feet he threatened her with his tomahawk, and, with menacing looks and gestures, urged her forward.

As the day passed, Agnes looked eagerly around, and endeavored to note some objects by which she could retrace the route they were taking. The country was wild and broken. Everywhere spread the primitive forest, with its monotony of hill and vale; its frozen water-courses, which afforded the readiest path through its mazes; its huge trees stretching their bare arms, locked in intricate embraces,

between her and the sky. Though the snow was not deep, its uniform covering prevented any distinctness in the different parts of the landscape, as they journeyed on. The day continued cloudy, with occasional falls of snow, and she could gain little idea of the direction in which she was travelling.

The air in these sheltered places was still and mild, every footfall was muffled, the winter had banished birds and insects, and, as they pursued their way amid the intense and brooding silence, there were times when Agnes' very breath grew hushed, and her pulses ceased to play. She moved mechanically, but she fancied she stood still, while the trees moved in a stately, solemn dance around her, and sounds and echoes struck her ear like voices from the far-off past. With an effort she would recover herself to the reality of cold and fatigue, and a cramping pain at her heart, that came in spasms, and left her faint and breathless.

They paused occasionally for a few moments of rest, and then she was driven or carried forward until twilight was darkening through the trees, and, utterly exhausted, she was ready to lie down and die. She had been hoping and watching all day for some sound that might indicate that her friends were in pursuit, and suddenly thought she heard footsteps, and a human voice.

“This way! this way! I am here!” she cried, wildly, with a shriek that echoed through the woods.

The Indian sprang upon her, and, grasping her throat, pressed her, choking, down to the ground, while his eyes glared

with rage as he twirled his tomahawk around his head to strike the fatal blow.

She thought her last moment had come, and doubtless her troubled life might then have ended, had not the savage recognized the voice which now called in reply, and, relaxing his stifling grasp, paused with his weapon nearly touching her forehead. A long interval of silence succeeded, and then Agnes saw Lawontica standing over her.

Although the Indian girl had so falsely betrayed her into captivity, there was an instinctive sense of relief at the sight of a familiar face, especially one of her own sex, and Agnes' first feeling was of thankfulness and joy. She caught at the hem of Lawontica's furred robe, exclaiming,

“ You are come! You will save me ? ”

But the face looking down upon her was hard and stern. The brows were knit until they met in one dark, heavy line above the gleaming eyes, and through the distended nostrils came short, angry puffs of breath, while the chest heaved as if a tempest were raging within it.

The Indian saw her mood, and, pressing on Agnes' shoulder, to keep her down, raised his tomahawk again, and, looking up at the wrathful woman beside him, said, in their native tongue,

“ She is a poor thing. She cannot walk. She will hinder us. She will scream and let the white man know she is here. They will come after and hear her. I will kill her. Then we can go on. When the white man comes she will not be with us. Who will know where she is ? ”

Lawontica hesitated. The black blood of revenge surged and boiled in her heart. In a delirium of jealousy and disappointed love, she had concocted the scheme, thus far carried out successfully. Now, what should be done with her captive?

Agnes had gathered from his gestures and expression the purport of the Indian's request, and saw the fluctuating expression of Lawontica's features as she listened. But she could not believe herself in danger; and her eyes — those tender, beseeching eyes — were fixed on that dark face more in wonder than alarm.

"Shall I do it?" asked the Indian again, and twirled the knife around his victim's head. The eyelids scarcely quivered over the blue eyes. She had suffered so much, she was losing even the sense of fear.

Lawontica looked at her in surprise, "Why you no cry? You no frightened?" she said, involuntarily, and motioned to the Indian to let go his hold.

"No, I am not frightened now," Agnes replied, as she arose, and, nestling close beside her betrayer, attempted to take her hand.

The hand was snatched away, and Lawontica asked, abruptly,

"Why you no frightened? S'pose he kill you?"

"You will not let him!" exclaimed Agnes, in her low, childlike voice.

"How you know that?" replied Lawontica, fiercely.

"O, because you could not. You, a young girl! — O, you could not let me be murdered before your eyes."

The Indian girl blushed and turned away her head, but she still felt the charm of the sweet face looking into hers without a shade of anxiety or fear.

"Maybe me go way, then he kill you," she persisted, but her tone was less angry than before.

"O, no, Lawontica," said Agnes, drawing nearer, and again taking her hand. "You will not let me be hurt, I know. You like me, and you will send me back to the farm. O, Lawontica, think how anxious they will be about me there!"

"You one very great fool!" exclaimed the Indian girl, passionately. "Me like you? No, no! me hate you! Ve'y much me hate you! Me hate 'um all white skin!"

"Why do you hate me? O, why are you so angry? and why have you brought me away from home?" said Agnes, pitifully.

The words aroused all the elements of discord. Lawontica snatched away her hand, frowning and stamping with her foot on the ground.

"You no tell me that question any more! Me great big angry! Me hate you! — ve'y much me hate you!"

Agnes gazed at her in wonder and fear, but answered slowly, as if her mind could not comprehend such passion in a woman,

"I don't believe you hate me so. I never did anything to make you angry. I always liked you. Besides, why did you save me, then, when he was going to kill me?"

Lawontica laughed bitterly.

“Why me no let him kill you? 'Cause you one little baby. Me hate you, but me pity you like you was *small* pappoose.”

With an expression of contempt she turned away, and sat down upon a fallen tree not far distant. Agnes did not follow. She knew intuitively that the crisis of rage was past, and Lawontica might be most safely left to the womanly nature which had recognized the claims of the helpless. She went through with no process of reasoning, but her fine perceptions were seldom at fault, and they did not deceive her now.

Too weary to stand, she wrapped the shawl around her, and sat down upon the ground. The shadows of evening fell rapidly, and, as they waited in silence and darkness, a light began to flicker behind the trees, as if a fire had been kindled not many rods distant. Upon seeing this, Lawontica arose quickly, and went towards the place where the other party had encamped. She returned with her arms full of skins and blankets, which she threw upon the ground beside Agnes, and then, assisted by the Indian, searched for a spot where she might sleep through the night. They brushed the snow from under a low-spreading tree surrounded by bushes, and piled a heap of hemlock boughs for a bed. Over these a wolf-skin was spread, and other skins, arranged over long sticks, supported against the tree, formed a small but snug shelter against the cold.

Chilled and weary, Agnes was glad to throw herself upon the elastic couch, and resign herself to the care of her capri-

scious protector. Lawontica wrapped her in a blanket, removed her wet shoes and stockings, substituting woollen leggings and moccasins lined with fur, and, pinning down the corners of her tent with some acacia thorns she found near by, left her to get warmed and rested. Peeping out behind the edge of the skin, Agnes saw the Indian, also screened from the wind and from observation beneath some bushes near, evidently on the alert to prevent any attempt at escape.

But she had no idea of escaping. The dark, tangled forest, with its mysterious noises, its awful loneliness, its prowling beasts, was of itself a terror to her; and now that Lawontica was near her apprehensions of death were changed to a certainty that nothing worse than captivity was intended for her. From this she trusted the friends she had left would find means to set her free. Impossible as it was to divine why she had been made captive, or what could have caused Lawontica's treachery, she confided in the authority she supposed a chief's daughter to possess over her tribe, and the returning friendship which would shield her from wrong. Amid all her terror and grief, she had felt no anger against her betrayer, but only wonder and regret at the misapprehension that must have caused such conduct, and confidence that the nobler nature of the Indian girl would soon resume its sway. This assurance of her childlike, innocent nature had been her salvation.

The deadliest purposes of vengeance had burned in Lawontica's heart. Trained, as she was, to note slight indications, and to watch the expression of faces, she had detected Frank's

interest in Agnes even before he was himself aware of its extent. But jealousy had warped her later judgment, and she fancied his affection was returned. It was a stormy awakening from a brief dream of delight. By her intense disappointment she first realized all she had half unconsciously hoped for. Utterly misconceiving the good-natured attentions and the assurances of friendship she had received, she believed herself to have been falsely deserted, and longed to punish her fickle lover and the fair object who had absorbed his thoughts.

While she was in all the sullen fury of this mood, Tamaque came to her with presents, after the Indian fashion of courtship, beseeching her to accept him for a husband. He had been rejected several times before, in spite of her father's command. The wilful girl was determined to have her own way in matrimonial affairs, and so long as she chose to remain with Sanoso her other relatives could have little influence over her. The pride of race, the prejudice and hatred against the white man, which the "great chief" had endeavored to cultivate, had been counteracted by her grandmother's teachings, and the kindness received from the neighboring farmers during her visits there.

To escape the pertinacity of her Indian lover, she had now remained many months with Sanoso. Her intercourse with the family at the farm-house had imparted a liking for civilized society, an admiration for the conveniences and comforts of the white man's home, and a longing for the courtesy with which white women were treated. All these she put away

from her now, with angry contempt that she should have forgotten what was due to herself as the princess of a despoiled people; and the seeds of bitterness, long ago implanted, germinated with frightful rapidity. She thought it was because she was an Indian girl she had been so easily deserted, in the vigor of her young life, in the pride of her beauty—deserted for a little pale girl, upon whom she looked with scorn, as immeasurably her inferior

For a time the revulsion of feeling swept away all that had been gentle and attractive in her nature. She had been despised; she meant to show herself powerful. She had been ready to kneel to Frank as to a superior being, and obey every indication of his will. Now he should sue to her, as alone potent to grant what was dearer than life, only to find himself repulsed and baffled. The girl who had been preferred before her should be crushed to the earth; made a servant, whose days would be bitter with hard bondage; should bear harsh words and blows, till her puny life was worn out in misery. The savage cruelty that delighted in slow and prolonged tortures for the captive taken in war worked in these untutored impulses, mingled with a shade of refinement arising from her superior intellect and the society she had enjoyed. On the morning when Frank had been an unseen witness of their meeting by the spring, she had detailed to Tamaque all she chose to reveal of her feelings and purposes. The Indians were at that time in a state of discontent, watching for an opportunity to make attacks upon the white settlers, their natural animosity having been stimulated and directed by the renegade Tories

who had joined them. To aid in the scheme Lawontica proposed, was an easy price to pay for obtaining his own wishes; but, since she seemed to expect some opposition, he craftily refused to do so, unless she would become his bride.

She could hesitate at nothing then, and the compact was sealed. Afterward, in calmer moments, came doubt, regret, repentance; but she had gone too far to recede without shame. The unforgiving temper of her race made them scorn any leanings to mercy which interfered with the retaliation due to an injury received; and she had represented, in general terms, that, because she was an Indian, she had been wronged and insulted. The happiness she had ceased to expect from love she determined to find in power; and, when Tamaque returned to fulfil his part of the contract, she would not weaken her influence over him by any irresolution.

She had passed the intervening days in alternate dread and desire for his coming, changeful fits of repentance and resentment, producing such gloom, and so many tears, that old Sároso was filled with anxiety. But, when the deed was done, Frank's distress and suspicion awakened defiance, and hardened her heart. She took pleasure in his pain. She exulted in her power to afflict him. The vengeance she had planned seemed too slow for her avaricious desire to wound and harrow his feelings, and she half determined her victim should be murdered, and left where he could find her cold in death.

But the fiery passion, raging all the more fiercely because all expression was suppressed, burnt itself out, even before

she saw Agnes; and her confiding appeal for protection aroused the magnanimous nature that would make its voice heard. That compassionate tone, once listened to, changed her rage into a remorseful pity, which manifested itself in the care she took for Agnes' welfare. She could not yet relent towards the principal offender; but, with an abrupt transition of feeling, she began to excuse Agnes, and determined to adopt her into the tribe, and thus secure for her all the lenity consistent with a captive state.

After leaving her upon the rude couch, Lawontica proceeded to the camping-place of her own party. She was careful, by stepping on logs and low bushes, to leave no trace of her footsteps.

Six Indians were collected around a fire. They had built it in a spot where some large trees, overthrown by a whirlwind, made a dense and high barricade of upturned earth, roots, trunks, and branches, on three sides of them. They had gathered a large quantity of brushwood, part of which crackled and flamed among the green sticks hissing upon the fire, and part were spread upon the ground in one corner, with a blanket thrown over them. This was intended for Lawontica's bed. The shelving roots and overlying branches formed a sort of roof above it, and sheltered it from the weather.

Some venison steaks, fixed upon forked sticks, were broiling slowly in favorable positions before the fire; and around it the warriors, gayly dressed, though not in full costume, lay in careless and picturesque attitudes. They had accompanied

Tamaque, not as a bridal escort, — for that would have been considered a very superfluous honor, even for the daughter of the “great chief,” — but to assist in protecting the captive, should she be pursued and discovered by her friends.

They did not trouble themselves with any burdensome civilities when Lawontica joined them. Her lover alone changed his lazy attitude, and motioned for her to take the warm place in the corner; but gallantry did not compel him to interfere, as she gravely declined the offer, and busied herself in watching the meat, and bringing fagots to replenish the fire. Her brief period of caprice and tyranny was past when she set out with him on the journey to his lodge, and she had the good sense to assume gracefully the duties so soon to be imposed upon her.

When the steaks were cooked, Lawontica laid them upon flat pieces of the bark of a tree; some parched corn, pounded fine and mixed with maple sugar, was produced from one of the packs, and they began to eat with the greediness of hungry men. She then withdrew two of the stones, on which the fire was first built; and, when they were sufficiently cool, wrapped them in a woollen cloth, and returned to Agnes. She also carried upon a flat piece of bark a slice of the best steak, reserved for this purpose.

It was so dark that she could not see her captive's face, as she unfastened the curtain and looked into the little tent.

“You here? S'pose you ve'y hungry now?” she said, as Agnes stirred, roused from a half-sleep by the change of air.

“No, not hungry. — Is it you, Lawontica? I am tired to death!” was the drowsy reply.

“Maybe you eat this, then; it rest you. Me bring you some hot stone, too. Ve’y much you cold, ve’y much these warm you.”

As she spoke, she placed the piece of bark in Agnes’ hands, and the savory smell of the meat quickened her appetite. Then laying the stones, one at her feet and one beside her, tucking the skins around so as to keep in the warmth, she replaced the curtain, and hastened away as carefully as before.

Agnes ate the food with a hearty relish, although she had been so exhausted as to be unconscious of hunger; and afterwards, hugging the hot stone in her arms, she nestled under the skins, and fell into a deep, refreshing slumber.

The abrupt tearing down of her frail tent first aroused her in the early morning, and, after a breakfast like her supper, brought her by the Indian, she was ordered to rise and pursue her way. In vain she pleaded for permission to join the other party. The scowling face of her guide indicated no knowledge of English, and he would not understand her signs. When she persisted in the request, he became impatient and struck her, pushing her forward so rudely that she stumbled and fell. She dared no longer disobey, and, with a heavy heart, walked along by his side.

It was a soft, lowering day, and the fleecy snow, falling at intervals, melted as it came down; but Agnes would have risked freezing, if she could have secured such clear, cold

weather as would have kept the track of her footsteps for her friends to follow, and enabled her to note more definitely the landscape around. From occasional sounds that reached her, she half fancied Lawontica and her party kept near them, though out of sight; and the conjecture was verified when, at evening, with the same precautions and the same care for her comfort, she was warmed, and fed, and snugly lodged. But Lawontica did not appear. Her guide was assisted by one of his own sex, who was waiting when they came to the preconcerted halting-place. It was a deep gorge between two hills, and the other party and their fire were out of sight, near the brow of the precipice that frowned above her.

Could she have kept her weary eyelids open, and her senses unlocked from slumber, on that night, she might have heard the friends who sought her, as they passed close beside her hidden resting-place. But she had lost courage and hope. Whichever way her thoughts turned, they met only phantoms of distress and fear. She felt as if forsaken by God and man. From that time forth a nightmare spell was upon her, and she walked and ate and slept as one goes through the events of a dreadful dream.

As they proceeded further and further from the settlements, the country through which they passed became mountainous, and difficult of access. They were going to a village occupied by a remnant of the Delaware tribe, and a few Iroquois, situated on one of the small streams that empty into the Great Bend of the Susquehanna; and, although they kept in the valleys as much as possible, they were obliged to

climb several steep hills, and the path was everywhere difficult. The cold also increased, and Agnes, wholly unused to exposure, suffered severely. After the first three nights she was allowed a fire when they halted, and the guns of the hunters supplied them with nourishing food; but every night she was more and more exhausted, as she threw herself upon the heap of boughs, and every morning she arose so weary that it seemed impossible she could live through another day. Yet she endured wonderfully, and it was not until they were within a few miles of their destination that her strength utterly failed, and she fell fainting to the ground.

Lawontica and the remainder of the party were but a little way in advance, and the Indian's call brought them back to assist him. He had lost all patience, and refused to have anything more to do with his irksome charge. In his opinion, the most sensible way would be to take her scalp and leave her there, where she would be no more trouble. What would she be good for? She would never be able to work.

But Lawontica had other views, and, by a little female diplomacy, she persuaded her lover, who influenced the others, and a rude litter was constructed, on which Agnes was laid, helpless and moaning with pain.

Nothing could induce them to enter the village bearing such an ignoble burden; but they turned aside a mile or two, and left the sufferer in the lodge of an old squaw, who lived alone on the mountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WOLF-MANITTO.

Two or three days of stupor and exhaustion followed, from which Agnes was aroused one morning by a hideous din, that might almost have waked the dead. The door of the lodge was tightly closed, and the small windows shut. A large fire burned upon the floor, over which hung a pot. Into this the old woman, Akzie, dipped a gourd, and poured the boiling liquid upon a row of heated stones beside the sufferer's couch, almost suffocating her with a hot, medicated vapor. Meantime, she was singing, with a monotonous tone much resembling that of a screech-owl, and rattling in one hand a calabash containing pebbles.

Her object was in the highest degree benevolent. She wished to drive away the evil spirit who kept her patient insensible, and was delighted with the success of her effort, as she saw Agnes start up suddenly, with a look that told she was conscious of what was going on. Having thrown the calabash into the fire, as an offering to the departing spirit, and attentively watched, for a few moments, the blue smoke that

“Curled and crowded up the smoke-flue,”

she approached the bed and felt of Agnes' pulse, looked into her mouth and eyes, and ejaculated,

“*Wullit ! amimens — pommauchfin !*”*

Agnes was too feeble to reply, even if she had understood the language, and her nurse turned to the fire, and, taking part of the liquid from the pot, in which herbs were boiling, mixed it with something she poured from a bottle-shaped gourd, and held the draught to Agnes' lips. She sipped a little, and, finding it palatable, drank the whole. Again the old woman ejaculated “*Wullit,*” and, carefully tucking the skins around her, left her to repose.

Almost immediately she was sensible of a profuse perspiration, and a cessation of the pain which had racked her stiffened limbs, and before long she sank into a light and refreshing slumber.

When she again awoke she asked for food. Akzie had prepared a broth made of rattlesnake's flesh dried and pounded, which was considered by Indian doctors the most nourishing diet for an invalid. But, as Agnes could not eat it, she substituted some cakes of Indian corn, broken into small pieces, and dipped into maple-syrup.

Akzie had some repute as a doctress, and exerted all her skill to restore the patient confided to her care. She could prepare various powerful medicines from roots and barks collected in the forest; and for the fever and rheumatic pain, induced by such severe fatigue, she applied the bark of the

* Good ! my child — you will live !

white walnut, and the fossil oil, or petroleum, collected from natural springs in the vicinity.

But here her skill ended. She had no "medicine for the mind diseased." She could not cure the quiet melancholy, the pining, listless apathy, that kept the pulse weak and the limbs weary. Her most renowned specifics failed for this, and she concluded that a spirit more obstinate or powerful than any she had hitherto coped with had taken possession of the girl.

One afternoon, three weeks after she had been brought there, Agnes for the first time crossed the threshold, and sat down on a stone outside the door. The hut was built in a warm, sheltered nook, facing the west, and not very far up the mountain side. Behind it rose a steep wall of rock, with ledges, in which vines and various shrubs had taken root, growing thin and stunted in the insufficient soil. Its top was crowned with a more vigorous growth, of evergreens, mingled with other trees, that in summer bedecked the mountain greenly, but now stood black and desolate. Beneath the foot of this cliff trickled a small stream, whose warm spring did not yield to the frost; and, as it now ran past the end of the wigwam, its low gurgling over its worn channel was the only sound that broke the silence.

From the open space before her she looked down upon the tops of trees in the valley below; and directly opposite, so near it seemed as if she might touch it, another steep mountain reared itself darkly till its crest reached the horizon, and there all its leafless trees, and the black cones of firs, stood

quivering between long flashes of crimson light, as if they palpitated with the glory of sunset.

There was nothing else. Those two mountains, and the lonely hut, with its bent and wrinkled inmate, were all that met her view. The forest shut her up to these.

She looked upward. Ay, there the view was boundless. Up, up, miles into the crystal blue, far past those tongues of flame-like cloud, her glance might pass unimpeded. But the shining ether dazzled her, the infinitude oppressed her weak heart. If help might come from thence, she had no strength to reach out her hands for it; and, helpless and despairing, she bowed her head and wept.

Old Akzie watched her with a pitying expression, now and then muttering some Indian words to herself. She had some time before ceased to attempt talking with her guest, for they could not understand each other. At length, she arose from her seat by the fire, and, going to the door, took Agnes' hand and drew her within the hut, saying, by a significant shiver and cough, that there was danger she would take cold. Then she placed beside the couch, where the girl had thrown herself, a wooden plate, containing cakes made of flour and flavored with dried berries, a dish of hominy, and a gourd containing maple-sugar.

Agnes smiled languidly at these formidable preparations to satisfy an appetite so slight as hers; but Akzie made her understand, by signs, that she was going away, and this food was to last until her return.

When Lawontica left her captive to Akzie's care, she begged

her to use every effort for her recovery; and the kind-hearted old woman, now that her own skill had failed, proposed to apply to a mighty conjuror, who lived on one of the mountains near. But little preparation was required for the visit. Her usual dress consisted of a flannel shirt she had bought from a trader. It was fastened over the bosom with large silver buckles. A cloth petticoat, scarcely a yard in width, reached below her knees, and her leggins were made of the same material. Her feet were covered with moccasins of deer-skin. Her long gray hair was tied in a queue.

She put on a man's hat, considerably worn and battered, threw a blanket over her shoulders, took from her secret store of treasures a string of wampum as an offering to the mighty man, and when she went out set up the piece of bark that formed the outside door of her hut, placing a stake against it as a fastening.

Agnes was left alone, and for a short time her nurse's absence was a positive relief. Half reclining on her couch, she watched the flames of the fire flickering, sinking, rising again in long flashes, that shot upward, on clouds of smoke, into the blue air above. With a sad, calm wonder, as one listens to an unfortunate friend one cannot aid, she thought over her whole life, with its strange vicissitudes. Her calm childhood, sunny as the May morning on which her eyes first opened; the peaceful village where her young life grew to maidenhood; the love that came like a destiny, and changed all—sudden love, that flashed through her innocent existence,

as the lightning through white summer clouds, and, alas scathed like the lightning. Then she remembered the fierce, burning delirium of anger and despair, and the hope which rose, phoenix-like, from the ashes of that spent fire, and led her on, struggling through difficulty and peril, to end—how?

Was it ended?—was this the end? She held up her thin hands to the light, and passed them over her wan face. Ah, surely she had little strength remaining in that emaciated frame, little power or life to struggle more. But the one thought, the love which had possessed her, blind and unreasoning as an instinct, yet mighty as an inspiration, changing her timid and passive nature, and urging her to effort, now revived from its temporary quiescence.

She *would not* die there. She would force herself to eat, to sleep, to gain strength. She would be patient and hopeful; she would watch and wait. When spring came, she would find her way back to the world, to that one spot which was her world—then would be time enough to die!

A slight noise arrested her attention; a quick footstep approached, the door was thrown down, the curtain pulled aside, and dropped again behind one entering. Agnes sprang to her feet, in alarm; but in the dim hut Lawontica stood, with the firelight gleaming over her, as she leaned forward, shading her eyes that she might see more clearly.

The white face opposite, with its golden curls, seemed to look at her from out a cloud, and the close air stifled her. She flung back the curtain violently, and turned again to the door. The chill winter twilight streamed down upon her

between the hills, and the crescent moon, jewelled with a large, lambent star, hung trembling in the dark above.

Agnes followed her to the door and stood near, yet not touching her. They had not met before, though Lawontica had been to the hut; for her visits had been at times when the invalid was asleep. They stood there, those two, so different and yet so strangely united, and for a few moments neither spoke. Agnes had thought of many reproaches, but she could not utter them now. The awful majesty of night, and solitude, and silence, hushed her spirit to a perfect calm. They two alone there amid the infinity of nature, that told God was so near! How could earthly passions dare to speak where there was no other voice or sound, and the dark shadows seemed to wrap them close, away from the world of man?

A prayer arose out of her heart, and God heard it in the darkness. She drew nearer, and laid her cold head upon the warm, throbbing palms Lawontica had pressed tight together.

"How awful and yet how glorious is the night!" she said. "Why do you tremble so, Lawontica?"

"It is cold. I shiver. Come in!" replied the Indian girl, shrinking away from her touch, and gliding through the low doorway.

Agnes obeyed, wondering at her companion's excitement; and when she had seated herself on the ground by the fire again, asked,

"What is the matter? You tremble still!"

"You been sick," replied Lawontica, evasively.

“Yes, I’ve been sick. Didn’t you think I would be?” Agnes said, in a reproachful tone.

Lawontica looked up, with a strange expression. Her face, her hands, her whole frame, were quivering. The words she meant to say died on her lips. It was the night after Frank’s escape from the village. That morning, Shamokin, the war-captain, the favorite brave of the tribe, had been found dead in the lodge from which his prisoners had fled. The most terrible excitement had followed. Shamokin’s wife was Lawontica’s half-sister, and, having an inkling of the position of affairs, had overwhelmed her with loud reproaches for having brought this trouble upon them, both by stealing away the captive, and by afterwards interfering to procure the release of the two white men who had come in search of Agnes. Added to this, Shamokin’s words had made Tamaque furiously jealous; and, on his return to their lodge, after the council broke up, he had scolded and beaten her for the part she had acted. Her womanly dignity thus insulted, and her fiercest passions roused, she had still too much pride to betray to her companions the tempest raging in her heart. The warriors and chiefs had all joined in chasing the white men, determined to have vengeance for the loss they had sustained, and the women had passed the day in bewailing the dead.

Lawontica had borne through all a cold, impassive face, and a mien that indicated nothing of her feelings. But self-control could not last forever, and, in her rapid walk to the hut, she had relieved her “pent bosom” by sobs and passionate cries. Then, Agnes’ pallid, wasted features, and mournful

eyes, met her like the face of an accusing spirit, rousing a train of emotion new and equally painful. Untutored as she was, she saw how, by yielding to her wild impulses, she had involved herself and all dear to her in peril and sorrow. She no longer wept, but, as a string suddenly snapped after strong pressure vibrates long, her quivering nerves and muscles revealed the rage, remorse, and grief, which had by turns convulsed her.

When Agnes' words of reproach met her ear, she turned upon her suddenly, with burning, fiery eyes, and a sharp tone, full of scorn and passion.

"You think nobody sick but you! Look, now! Me feel so bad maybe me take poison! — maybe me kill myself to-moller!"

"What is the matter?"

She paused a moment, and then, gazing steadily at Agnes, replied,

"He come here! — Flank — he come! He come for you!"

"What do you say?" cried Agnes, in great agitation. "Has Frank been here? Where is he? O, do let me go home with him!"

She clasped her hands, and, crouching on the floor, looked up with the most beseeching expression. But the face she gazed at grew very pale and stern.

"He gone — no matter. Never you go back with him — never, never! Me no let you."

"O Lawontica! what have I done?"

“You? — You love him! You marry him!” exclaimed Lawontica, springing up; and her tone was as if the words had been jerked from her lips by the act.

“I? — O, no, no, — never!” replied Agnes, shaking her head slowly, with a pitiful half-sigh.

Her manner more than her words arrested her hearer, and compelled belief.

“What! not love him? — not love Flank?” she cried, incredulously.

“No. What made you think I did?” said Agnes, in a more decided tone.

“Ve’y much he love you.”

“And was that what you brought me here for?”

Lawontica turned away her head, but her silence was expressive.

“O, Lawontica,” Agnes broke forth, in a tumult of feeling, “I did not love him. He would have forgotten me soon. I was going away the next day. I should never have seen him any more. He would have loved some one else, and been happy. O, foolish girl! you have perilled his life, you have ruined yourself and me. No, no, I did not love him — not as you mean. I could not!”

“Could not? What for?” The anxiety, the despair of her tone, was terrible.

Agnes paused a moment. Was it the reflection of the fire-light, or did a faint blush steal up, reddening the marble whiteness of her face, and suffusing the dark, troubled eyes?

Lawontica seized her arm with a grasp that left its mark after.

"Tell 'um me, what for?" she repeated.

Agnes threw her other arm around the girl's neck. The muscles were like steel, but the proud head yielded to that gentle touch till she could whisper something she appeared afraid to speak aloud.

When she withdrew her lips, Lawontica turned upon her as if half insane.

"Is that true? You sure you speak me true?" she asked.

"Yes, O, yes! Believe me, it is true!"

Lawontica threw her from her with a reckless force, and rushed out of the hut. Agnes fell upon the heap of skins, and was unhurt. She sprang to the door in a moment, and called loudly, but she was too late. The darkness swallowed up her voice, and gave back no echo. She listened. There was the faint shiver and murmur of the pine-trees to the rising wind, or now and then the crackling fall of icicles, as the branches shook off their crystal burden, but nothing more.

The stillness seemed appalling, the solitude oppressive, after that brief, fervid scene through which she had passed. All she had ever heard or read of the terrors and perils of the wilderness, of savage beasts and savage men, crowded into her mind. She drew up the outer door as well as she could, and, fastening the curtain tightly within, replenished the fire, and threw herself once more upon her couch, to pass long, sleepless hours.

Nature, exhausted, at length gave way, and her slumber was prolonged and deep. The opening of the door, the streaming in of the cool morning air and the light, awoke her in time to see old Akzie enter the hut, followed by a figure so grotesque and hideous that she could not repress a scream of terror.

Akzie said, "Hoosh, hoosh! Manitto, Manitto!" making, as she spoke, a reverential gesture towards the creature lingering in the doorway, and, while she patted Agnes' shoulder assuringly with one hand, beckoning with the other for him to enter.

He appeared to be an immense wolf, with glassy eyes, and teeth grinning horribly. Occasionally he raised himself upon his hind legs, and turned his head from side to side, but would not advance till Akzie produced string after string of wampum, and laid it before him. Sufficient time had elapsed for Agnes to recover from the first shock of his appearance, and this avaricious desire for money seemed so much like a human rather than a wolfish disposition, that she began to suspect who her strange visitor might be.

Perceiving that Akzie had emptied her treasure-chest, — if a hole in the floor where she kept her wampum may be dignified by that name, — the creature gathered the strings together with his paw, and, lifting them to his mouth, seemed to swallow them. Then, with a spring like a wild beast, and a prolonged howl, he came to Agnes' side.

By a great effort she retained some degree of composure, but hardly knew whether to shudder or laugh at the unprece-

dented situation in which she found herself. The wolf smelled around her, one moment howling and cutting such strange antics that she began to consider herself a veritable "little Red Riding-Hood," about to be eaten up, and the next moment sitting quietly on his haunches, and feeling her pulse and clasping her arm with a touch that restored her confidence; since she detected beneath the wolf's claws the fingers of a man's hand.

After some time consumed in this way, he drew from his open jaws various small packages, some of which he threw upon the fire, filling the air with a sickening odor, and the rest he mixed, and, after various incantations, filled the gourd containing them with water, and held it to Agnes' lips.

But she was determined not to drink, and, though she felt ill and faint, persisted in her refusal. This displeased the creature, who redoubled his howls; and, to obtain a moment of quiet, she took the gourd in her own hands, pretending she was about to comply with his wishes. As he waited, she turned to Akzie with a look of inquiry. The old woman's face expressed the utmost anxiety and awe, and she tried to make Agnes understand that if she drank she would vomit forth the evil spirit, and be cured of her illness.

But the patient did not fancy the mode of cure, and, with a quick motion, overturned the whole upon the ground. The sorcerer sprang upon her with a yell, as if he would have torn her limb from limb, seized her with his paws, shook her with a very human rage, and then ran out of the hut, imitating the gait of the animal whose form he had assumed.

Akzie was paralyzed with terror. The offended sorcerer might, she thought, visit her with any infirmity, any tormenting disease, any misfortune he chose to inflict, as a punishment for treating his most precious medicines with such audacious contempt. She believed he could, by a subtle charm, even cause her death within a few hours, without coming near her again. She was very miserable through the day, and many times threw tobacco on the fire, and prostrated herself before it, crying, "Here, take that and smoke, and don't hurt me."

Agnes pitied her superstition, and became interested in endeavoring to remove it. She assumed a calm, cheerful manner, and often pointed upwards and repeated the name of God, as if invoking his protection. But Akzie's fears could not be pacified. She was not worshipping the devil, as Agnes supposed, — for most of the Indians considered the devil to exist only for the use of white people, — but the man whose aid she had been at some pains to procure had made himself feared by all in the surrounding villages. He lived alone, in various places among the mountains, removing his residence as suited his fancy. As he seldom allowed himself to be seen in his own form, many believed him to be a "wolf-manitto," a divinity subordinate to the Great Spirit, yet endued with much power; and that he could, at pleasure, take either the human form or any other he chose. Long habit had enabled him to copy the habits of the bear and wolf so closely that he was enabled to keep up this delusion.

The Indians believed there were many of these inferior deities, and that the Great Spirit preferred to be worshipped

through sacrifices offered to them. They looked upon the elements, almost all animals, and even some plants, as inhabited by spirits more or less dignified and powerful, and had full faith that sometimes these "manittoes" revealed themselves to men, lived with them, and were capable of doing them great good or harm.

The "wolf-manitto" was an expert juggler, who had acquired almost unlimited power over the superstitious in that vicinity. The mystery he maintained about his place of abode, appearing now here, now there, at unexpected moments, the skill he had acquired in medicine, and in observing the weather and foretelling its changes, made him a wonder, and an object of dread. They brought abundant offerings of corn, tobacco, and vegetables, to the places where he was known sometimes to dwell, expecting him to be aware of it, and to give them a favorable journey or a successful hunt. And when they happened to find him present, they were ready to pay him any amount of wampum to cure their sick, and to buy from him the charms or "besoms" he sold, powerful to ward off danger, or procure some coveted good.

It is not strange, therefore, if Akzie was overcome with alarm at the angry snarl by which he had testified his displeasure. At first she simply waited, trembling, for the swift destruction she anticipated. But, as it did not come, she began to hope that by getting rid of her guest she might avert the danger. A day and a night had passed, and as she did not yet feel the pains of dissolution, she took courage, and

set out to go to the village and tell Lawontica she must come and take the captive to her own lodge.

Agnes was very unwilling to be left again alone. The excitement of the last few days had been of benefit, and her eyes were brighter, and her step less languid. Hope had entered her heart, bringing its dreams of the future to cheer the barrenness and alleviate the annoyances of her present life; and, to divert the thought which had been fixed too much upon herself, she had conjectures in regard to Lawontica, and fears for the safety of those friends who had sought her in the wilderness.

She longed inexpressibly to see Lawontica again, and know all that had transpired. When Akzie put on her blanket to go out, she begged for permission to accompany her, but it was denied. The old woman pushed her back roughly into the hut, fastened the door upon her, and walked away, shaking her head and crooning Indian syllables as she struck her staff into the snow. She looked like a witch muttering spells, and trying the strength of her broomstick before mounting for a flight.

CHAPTER XX.

LIFE IN THE LODGES.

THE path from the hut wound around the mountain, and down into the narrow valley where Lawontica lived. Akzie had started late in the afternoon, and it was dark when she arrived at the village. As she passed up the valley, just beyond the sudden turn of the stream towards Umquabog, she came upon a collection of posts set in the earth. It was a burial-place, and these were the monuments. Each was ornamented with some significant device. A chief's was neatly carved with emblematical figures, telling his services or his character. The captain's was painted red, and bore a rude portrait of him who slept below. A physician's was hung with the small tortoise-shells and calabash he had used in his practice. The graves of humble individuals were marked simply with the "totem" of their tribe or family.

Beside these some old women were digging another grave. This work, too repulsive for the young, was devolved upon them; and, as the frozen earth yielded slowly to their rude implements, they accompanied their labor with a rise and fall of the voice, doleful and monotonous in the extreme. She

asked for whom they were at work, and they told her of Shamokin's death, extolling him as a brave warrior, devoted to his nation, and interrupting themselves with shrieks and lamentations.

The Indians who went in pursuit of Lawson and his party had returned during that day, bringing back the dead body of one of their number, and two others wounded. The excitement in the village was intense. Rage and grief struggled for mastery on every face. Not to have taken one prisoner to wreak their vengeance upon was a disappointment too great to be borne, and mingled with regrets for the dead were fierce threats against the living. Immediately after finding him dead, they had dressed Shamokin's corpse in a new suit, with the face and shirt painted red, and laid him on a mat in the centre of the hut. All his implements of war, his gun, his tomahawk, his hatchet, his heavy club studded with iron nails, were brought and laid in a pile on one side, and on the other were placed his clothes, hunting apparatus, and domestic goods. In the evening, far into the night, and at early morning before daylight, the female relations and friends had assembled to weep and howl over the deceased.

His interment was to take place that evening, and when Akzie reached the hut where he lay she found it filled with the mournful group. Lawontica was among them. The cries she uttered, longest, shrillest of any, were burdened with the weight of misery in her own soul. She knew not where to turn for relief from the corroding self-reproach she endured. That Frank and his brother had escaped their pur-

suers was small relief, for she knew their fate was but postponed. Tamaque was bound by every tie of honor to avenge the death of his relative; and an Indian never forgets such a claim, though years may elapse before it is accomplished. She had never loved her husband. Now these thoughts were added to the memory of his harsh words and the blows he had given her; and though in this she had but suffered the usual lot of an Indian woman, her proud spirit rebelled against it none the less bitterly. She realized that by a little patience, a little forgiveness, she might have avoided all this; and the "law written in her heart," the voice of conscience, told her that her punishment was just.

Her marriage with Tamaque might indeed be dissolved, for the Iroquois held that tie lightly, and husbands and wives could part and form other unions upon the most trifling pretext, without losing character among their companions. But she could never regain the position she had lost, as a favorite in the family who had been so kind to her, or hope for even a smile of friendship from the man she had loved with such consuming strength of affection. These reflections maddened her, and she broke forth into such wailing cries, that Tamaque, who listened, thought he must have wronged her by his suspicions, and repented of having entertained them. Surely, if she thus mourned for Shamokin, her heart must be true to her nation and to him.

Later in the evening, the nearest relatives of the dead entered the hut, and took up the mat on which the body lay. Others seized the articles heaped beside him, and thus the

irregular procession went forth to the grave. The young boys ran along with torches, so that all might see how bravely the corpse was dressed, and the number of his possessions. The women followed at some distance behind. Even his wife was not allowed any particular marks of attention or respect; for the Delawares, holding, with some modern progressives, that the marriage tie is only binding so long as the parties are pleased with each other, declared "a man's wife was no relation to him," and did not allow her any share in the honors of the funeral, or the distribution of the property.

The shallow grave was lined with pieces of bark, and upon this they lowered the body, with its head towards the east, covering it with one large piece, which had been stripped from a tree and flattened for the purpose. Then the frozen earth was heaped above, and a post set up, painted red, to signify the rank of the deceased. The scene was weird and solemn. Far above their heads, the crests of the hills were relieved in black outlines against the clear darkness of a night-sky, lit by the young moon and her attendant stars. But in the depths of the valley where they stood the shadows seemed to gather more heavily, in contrast with the ghostly, gleaming white of the snow, and the red torch-light. The rites at the grave were conducted in silence, and with much deliberation. But ever and anon, from out the gloom, at a little distance, came the wild wailing of the women, who had paused there, watching the ceremonies in which they had no share.

When the earth and snow had been packed and smoothed

over the opening, and the memorial-post set up, Shamokin's property was divided among his friends, and the strangers present who had assisted at the burial.* From this moment it was proper to forget the dead, and the men went back to the village, and passed the night in drinking and boasting to each other of their achievements in war.

The women retired more slowly; and Akzie, after looking among them in vain for Lawontica, returned to the grave, and found her standing beside it.

She turned at the sound of footsteps near, and, recognizing her visitor, said, sharply, in her native tongue,

“What! — can one never be alone? — Always peeking, prying — you old woman!”

“Maybe so!” returned Akzie, highly offended. “But the white woman — the wolf-manitto, he eat her up.”

Lawontica's tone changed to one of alarm.

“What you been doing?” she cried, catching her arm to detain her. Akzie was going away in anger, but a few kind words mollified her temper. She really loved Lawontica, and was anxious to please her.

But when she had told of the events of the preceding day, her hearer was much disturbed. She dreaded, not only the magic power of the “wolf-manitto,” which she scarcely dared to doubt, but at once realized the danger to which Agnes was exposed, left alone there on the mountain, defenceless, against the vengeance of an angry man. She paused not a moment for reproaches, but started away from Akzie, and ran swiftly along the path to the hut.

She found Agnes safe, and sleeping quietly. Fortunately, the sorcerer believed in his own arts, and had deemed it would be more for his honor to employ them, instead of taking other means to punish the stranger. He was prudent too, and waited to know who Agnes might be, and whether it would be safe for him to kill her. That he had been employed to cure her, argued that her life was of some consequence, and he did not wish to provoke enmity by meddling with the powerful men of his tribe.

Yet scarcely had Lawontica, actuated by her fears, wrapped Agnes in blankets, and led her a few rods down the path to the village, when the creature, walking like a wolf, approached from an opposite direction, and, throwing down the door, looked into the hut. If he had found the girl there alone, there is little doubt what her fate would have been. But she never knew the peril she escaped. When Akzie reached her dwelling it was deserted, cold, and desolate.

It was midnight before the two women arrived at Lawontica's lodge. As they passed the council-house, a bright light shone through the open door, and they caught a glimpse of two warriors dancing, with fantastic gestures, in the midst of a circle of their comrades. The house was crowded, many of the men were intoxicated, and the confusion indescribable.

"Drunken dogs!—when they go home they beat their squaw," Lawontica ejaculated in disgust.

Agnes hurried her on. She felt in as much peril then as when alone upon the mountain. As they came on, she had been told of the capture and escape of her two friends; and,

though Lawontica had assured her she would be in no danger, since she would publicly adopt her into the tribe, the thought of living among men sworn to be revenged on the white race filled her with alarm.

When they reached the lodge, they saw the firelight from within gleaming along the edge of the curtain before the door. Lawontica pulled it aside hastily, and beheld her husband sitting by the fire. She half expected he was at the council-house, and it was a relief to find him here. Advancing to his side, she held Agnes tightly by the hand; and when, after an interval of silence, he deemed it consistent with dignity to look up, she said, briefly,

“See. Here is the woman the white men came for. Henceforth she is my sister.”

This was all that was necessary. The Indian prided himself almost as much as the Arab does upon observing the rites of hospitality. The stranger, thus adopted into a family, was treated by every member of it, and by all the tribe, as if born of their own people, and his safety was secured so long as no attempt was made to escape. Such an attempt exposed him to instant death, if it proved unsuccessful, or he was afterwards retaken.

Late as was the hour, Lawontica then prepared supper, and exerted herself to do honor to her housekeeping. She boiled chestnuts, hominy, and potatoes, and broiled some venison steaks, sprinkling them with salt to improve the flavor. She had a small table of rude manufacture, which she set before Agnes, but Tamaque took his portion upon the bench

where he was sitting. For dessert, she had hickory and beech nuts, and delicate cakes of maple-sugar. The repast might have satisfied the most fastidious, for all her utensils were clean and new, and her skill in cooking unimpeachable.

To please her friend, Agnes ate heartily, though somewhat awed by Tamaque's gloomy silence, and the freezing hauteur with which his wife moved about the cabin. Only when she looked at or addressed Agnes did her brow unbend, or her voice soften. But Tamaque did not seem to notice either of them. When his supper was finished, he smoked his pipe a while, and then retired behind the curtain separating his bed from the rest of the apartment.

Lawontica prepared in another corner a couch of mats covered by a skin, on which Agnes was glad to lie down. The blankets she had worn wrapped her warmly, and, with a sense of comfort and security she had not known since she left the farm-house, she yielded to the pleasing half-slumber that stole over her. But when, rousing now and then, during the night, she lifted up her head to look around, she saw Lawontica sitting on the floor beside the glimmering fire, her head leaned forward on her knees, silent and motionless as a statue.

After this, some weeks passed without any event of importance. Agnes' mind was at ease, for Lawontica had promised that in the spring she should be restored to her friends; yet the time passed wearily. No one in the village insulted or molested her, but she dared not venture out of its precincts, lest she should meet the "wolf-manitto," whose image haunted

her. When the snow was not too deep, the men formed hunting-parties, which were generally successful, and supplied the lodges with meat. At other times they sauntered along the street, or lounged in their houses, smoking, and telling what they meant to do in company with their brothers, the English, as soon as the opening spring would allow them to go out to war.

The women brought fagots from the hillside, and water from the brook, and did all the work of housekeeping; but this, in their simple modes of living, occupied but little time. To Agnes their existence seemed barren and monotonous, and their range of ideas limited in the extreme. As she learned more of their language and employments, this opinion was confirmed. She saw much drunkenness and wrangling, and but little manifestation of affection in most of the families around. The children, indeed, were treated with unlimited indulgence by both parents; but, except in rare instances, the husbands were tyrants, and the women were slaves. Yet even here force of character asserted its power, and a rude sort of etiquette restrained the natural selfishness of the race.

Sometimes they had dances, which they seemed to enjoy, although conducted with a gravity inconsistent with amusement. Both sexes assembled in the council-house, and first the males, and then the females, performed for the edification of beholders; moving lightly, with a graceful, even step, forward and backward, until they had completed the circle. But to speak with each other was hardly allowed, and to laugh or joke was highly disreputable.

Sometimes Indian preachers entered the village and harangued the multitude, teaching a most absurd *mélange* of doctrines regarding their conduct in the present and their condition in the future state. Those who were troubled about sins already committed they advised to rid themselves of propensities to evil by taking violent emetics, or by whipping themselves severely, to beat the bad spirit out.*

Lawontica used to carry Agnes to these meetings and dances, and interpret to her whatever she wished to understand. But she took no part in either, and her face expressed only scorn, indifference, or weariness. She attended to her household duties faithfully; her lodge was the neatest in the village; her dress and Tamaque's always in order, and tastefully ornamented, and she never complained of any labor or hardships. But neither reproaches nor caresses from her husband could change her cold, abstracted manner, and even Agnes was at times half afraid of the stern woman, who was so unlike her former self.

As spring advanced, messages to the chiefs from their comrades in other towns became more frequent, and they began to get their arms ready, and prepare for war. The

* It is interesting to observe how superstition repeats itself. Some of these Indian preachers advocated polygamy, and declared "it was a charitable and meritorious thing in them, as men living in intimacy with God, to take these poor, ignorant women and lead them in the way to God, and the enjoyment of eternal felicity." See Loskeil's "History of the Mission of the United Brethren," published in 1794.

Mormonism may, perhaps, claim an earlier date than has been allowed it hitherto.

Indians seldom went out on hostile expeditions during winter, as their enemies could easily trace them by the tracks in the snow, and retaliate the injuries committed. Lawontica had feared the first expedition would be to the settlement in Jersey where her friends lived; but those with whom they were allied proposed going in another direction, and they were persuaded to postpone the gratification of private revenge until another season.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FOREST PEOPLE.

It was one of those bright, warm days of early spring, that are in themselves so fair we forget to thank them for the promise they bring of halycon summer hours. Patches of snow still lay along the uplands and in shady hollows where great drifts had piled, but they were speedily dissolving into streams that hurried singing around the mossy roots of trees, and between verdurous banks, to lose themselves in dells and dingles, soon to be gay with blossoming shrubs and flowers. The sweet face of nature, thus washed after the torpor and defilement of her burial, looked smilingly up to the warm sky, which smiled back upon her through masses of vaporous rose-tinted cloud, and sent messages of hope and congratulation in fragrant winds, low-breathed and soft, from out the amber west. Amid this wonderful change, this miracle of awakening life, Frank Grey paused upon the spot where three months before he had crept painfully across the frozen stream to gain the opposite hill. Now the jubilant waters rushed swift and strong down their rocky channel, and he saw it would be vain to attempt a passage at this point. He was

foot-sore and weary, and hardly knew in which direction to turn in order to effect his object, and gain the shelter of the cave where Lawson and his party had been hidden.

He had come from home alone. Accustomed since childhood to track the mazes of the forest, he had no fear of losing his way, or of being unable to sustain life. His only fear was in being discovered by the Indians, and one person could be concealed better than a number. He knew the Iroquois warriors would probably join the English at the opening of the campaign, and hoped for an opportunity to see Lawontica, and at least learn Agnes' fate. During the tedious hours of illness he had thought over and over again all the particulars of her disappearance, and the strange demeanor of the Indian girl; and, however others might waver, he was firm in the belief that, in some unaccountable way, the two were connected. A dim suspicion of Lawontica's motives and feelings at times flashed across his mind, but he laughed at it and put it away, preferring to remain in ignorance rather than accept such a solution of the mystery.

His brave and chivalrous disposition would have inclined him to persevere until he found Agnes, even had he not loved her; but now his whole life was set on that one purpose with an intensity which banished every other project, and made every opposing motive feeble.

Percy was now engaged in his military duties at Morristown, and the aged parents were once more left alone in the farm-house. Yet they did not trouble him with any prophecies of evil for himself or them; and his mother — the good

mother, who always said the right word at the right moment — assured him that she had an inward token his journey would be successful. Thus far he had met with no trouble. Insect, bird, and wild creature, the hum and bustle of young, joyous life, flitting, creeping through the underbrush and beneath interwoven boughs, had beguiled his lonely way. He had crossed the rivers and larger streams upon rafts, which were easily constructed, and when he rested had not been afraid to surround himself with all the comforts of a hunter's life.

But now he was so near the settlements that great care was required to prevent discovery; and, concealing himself in the midst of a thick clump of alders, he tried to recall more distinctly the features of the country in that vicinity, as they had been described to him again and again by Sanoso. The old woman persisted that they wronged her child by their suspicions, and was very anxious to go with Frank to the village, although too infirm for so long a journey. She missed Lawontica sadly, and seemed to have grown suddenly aged since her departure.

While Frank remained in his covert, there was a rustling of the branches near, and a deer broke through the thicket of bushes and advanced to the edge of the stream. A moment he stood, tossing his antlered head in waltz strength, and pawing with one hoof at the wet pebbles. Then he stooped to drink a little, standing mid-leg deep in the stream; then turned his head, his delicate ears moving with a quick motion towards the faint sound that reached them, and, with a great

leap, dashed into the foaming waters. He breasted them gallantly, swimming where he lost footing, until he gained the opposite bank, when he laid his horns back upon his neck, and, sniffing the air, with nose erect, plunged into the woods.

In another moment the thicket was stirred again, with a slower motion, and the cause of the deer's alarm was manifest. A large wolf, moving somewhat awkwardly, Frank thought, came to the margin and seated himself on his haunches. His teeth seemed to be set in a fixed snarl, but he made no noise except a slight panting, as if he was weary. Frank watched his unexpected visitor, apprehensive that if he was discovered the consequences might be rather unpleasant; but the creature seemed unconscious of his presence. After resting a while, he put up his fore-paws, squirrel-like, and rubbed his jaws. Instantly his mouth opened, the lower jaw falling, and he scooped the water in his paws and threw it into his mouth.

Frank's eyes opened wide in wonder. He thought he had discovered something new in the natural history of wolves. He was not surprised, after this, to see the animal lift itself on its hind legs, look earnestly up stream, and then, dropping into a natural position, move off in that direction. Frank ventured out far enough to view his course, and was again puzzled to see him, at a certain point, assume an erect posture and ford the stream.

Pondering upon this strange event, Frank waited some time longer, and, hearing nothing more, took advantage of the knowledge thus gained, and crossed the brook in the same shallow place. He went on slowly, stopping every few mo-

ments to listen ; but no sound of human life broke the woodland silence. When he reached the flat rock above the village, he ventured one peep into the valley. The men were lounging in the sunshine. About the doors of the lodges some women were pursuing their household avocations, and some were washing clothes in the brook. As his eyes were fixed upon Lawontica's lodge, a slight figure came out and sat down under a tree upon the bank of the stream, as if to watch the women at their work. The short Indian dress she wore gave her a childish appearance, but there was no mistaking the bare head with its golden curls.

It was Agnes, his beloved, his lost one ! Frank came near shouting aloud, in the ecstasy of his joy. But that very joy sobered him the next moment into prudence and caution. He drew back, and hid himself among the trees.

Some days might elapse before he could speak with her, and, meantime, he must have a safe hiding-place.

He had little difficulty in finding the cave, for, following an undefined path, he was led directly to the ledge overhanging its mouth. The vines hanging over the opening were now green with young leaves, and formed a curtain almost impervious to the light.

Descending the narrow foothold, he parted the living screen and entered. Everything remained as when he last saw it — the dried leaves upon the floor, the belts and strings of wampum festooned about the low roof. But upon the rock just within the curtain lay ears of corn, a gourd containing hominy, and a heap of nuts. He did not notice them at first.

The sudden change from the light outside made the darkness intense until his eyes became accustomed to the gloom.

While he hesitated whether he should remain in a spot evidently frequented, if not inhabited, he heard a shuffling footstep approach, and drew back to the extreme corner. What was his surprise to see, instead of any human creature, the same gigantic wolf whose motions had so excited his curiosity! The animal paused at the entrance, raised itself up, and, holding the vines in its paws, appeared to examine them. Then it handled the food upon the floor, which had been disarranged by Frank's foot, and, again lifting the vines, held them back so as to let the daylight into the cave, and looked into its recesses.

Frank had watched the wolf with a mixture of wonder and anxiety that nearly stopped his pulses. In the narrow space a close encounter would scarce fail to be deadly, and Agnes' deliverance depended upon his life.

An hour seemed to pass in that brief interval of suspense, and then a sudden growl convinced him he was seen. He had been unwilling to shoot, lest the sound should betray him to the Indians, but now there was no alternative. He sprang up from his crouching posture, fired, and then clubbed his gun to defend himself against the dying struggles of the powerful beast.

But through the din of the explosion, echoing from the rocky walls, came the cry of a mortal agony; and when the smoke eddied out from the low opening he saw the wolf's

skin shot away, and a human form, torn and bloody, lay quivering, but dead, upon the floor.

It was the sorcerer, a more dangerous foe than any savage animal. Frank was utterly bewildered at the revelation, but, thankful for his own escape, drew the body into the darkest corner of the cavern, and determined to remain at least until night before seeking another shelter. He lay down near the entrance, that he might be aware of the approach of any intruder, and satisfied his hunger with the food he found there.

Several hours passed, during which several Indians came along a path at no great distance, laden with the spoils of a hunting expedition; but none turned towards the cavern. The sun had nearly set, and Frank began to think himself safe for that day, when a few stones rattled down from above, as if some one walked in the path which had brought him thither; and soon the soft, light fall of a moccasined foot was heard on the narrow ledge, and a woman's form paused before the screen of vines.

She could not see into the darkness of the cave, though she looked furtively between the leaves; but Frank saw and recognized her at once, and waited to know what she would do.

She carried in one hand a pouch containing some tobacco, and a pipe of red stone, handsomely carved and ornamented. Over her arm hung strings of purple wampum. After pausing a short time, she said, softly, in the Delaware language,

“*Wetcehemend — pentamn!*”*

There was no reply, and she stooped down, raised the end of the trailing vines, and, seeing some one indistinctly, repeated her words, and placed her offering of tobacco on the floor. Without a sound Frank clasped her hands as she withdrew it, and held her in that position.

He could not see the startled expression, first of fear, then of surprise and uncertainty; but he felt the thrill that ran along her veins, — her face was close to his, with only the vines between. She did not attempt to pull her hand away, as he had expected, but, after remaining quiet a moment, turned it slowly in his so as to bring her fingers against his palm. Then she felt along to the wrist. He wore an Indian dress, and she was still in some uncertainty; but she said, in English,

“The wolf manitto no here — who this be?”

Frank lifted the screen so as to reveal himself, and, drawing her within the cavern, said, at the same time,

“It is me, Lawontica. What wonderful chance sent you here just now? You are the very person I wanted to see.”

She uttered a faint cry, and sat down on the floor, as if seized with a sudden weakness. Then, starting up again, she said, with an eager, frightened air,

“What you come for? — you no safe anywhere. My people he ve’y mad, ’cause you kill Shamokin. He burn you, cut you, kill you horribly, if he catch you. Go, hide! — Sartin you no safe, they catch you!”

* My father, hear!

"I'm hid safe enough here — you won't betray me," said Frank, coolly.

"But, the wolf-manitto — he live here. Tamaque, he see him this morning on the mountain. Maybe he be here soon, then he go tell. Very much he hate white mans."

"And did you bring him presents?"

"Yes. Me pay him, so he no hurt — somebody."

"He'll hurt nobody, after this. He's dead."

She stared at him, with a frightened face.

"Yes — he's dead — I killed him," repeated Frank.

"And you 'live, now!" she exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Yes — why not? He came in here, and I thought it was a wolf when I fired at him. Was he a sorcerer, or a spy? He deserved to be shot for making such a beast of himself."

Lawontica groaned, and turned pale with terror. She could not believe that this man's awful and mysterious power had ceased with death, and dreaded the vengeance his spirit would take when it assumed some other form. It was some time before Frank could reäsure her, or persuade her that the magic she feared was a cunning delusion. Not even his influence could have kept her there, had she known the dead body was so near.

When the first fright had abated, other emotions resumed their sway. Frank asked her of Agnes, and learned how she had been situated since her captivity. It had become too dark for him to distinguish her features, but he noticed how cold and hard her voice grew as she talked, and with what angry abruptness she interrupted the thanks he gave her for

the kindness she had manifested. He had judged rightly that thanks were, in this instance, more politic than reproaches.

"No matter," she said, sharply, shrinking away from him, as he tried to take her hand; "no matter 'bout you lying so. I know you no thank me. You think me steal her 'way from you! Well, maybe so. Now you come for her, maybe me help you take her back."

"I shall thank you for that, at any rate, and you can't help yourself," replied Frank, in his own saucy way. What a host of recollections the tone brought to madden her!

She could control herself better now than formerly, and, pressing back the tide of thought, answered, calmly,

"You must do as I say. All 'round here many Indians, he find you. Never he come in here. Ve'y much he 'fraid the wolf-manitto. Only he bring presents, bring wampum, maybe, and pay for 'beson.' You know 'beson'?"

"No. What is it?" said Frank.

"Like this," she answered, placing in his hand something she disengaged from her own necklace of silver coins.

"You take it. Maybe you find something here, you make one like. When they come never he lift the vines — he push 'em out — so you safe."

"Ah!" said Frank, "I take it you will have me personate this famous manitto. Good! I'll do it. Won't I growl at 'em? That's a bright thought of yours, Lawontica."

"You have 'um skin?" she asked.

"I'll look out for that," he said, carelessly; "but tell me, how long am I to stay in this hole?"

“One — two, maybe seven nights. My people he take up the hatchet — his brother say, go fight. Then he go.”

“They ’re waiting for orders, are they?”

“Yes. When the great chief go, then all go. Then we go to your house. Walk ve’y slow. Agnes, he weak, pale, breathe quick when he walk much. Indian woman, he doctor her. Maybe he get better by-’m-by.”

“It was that cruel journey! It must have nearly killed her. O, Lawontica, how could you?” said Frank, bitterly; but she interrupted him.

“Whoosh! never you say that any more — never!” and then, in a low, tender tone, added, sighing, “*Gasinquinasbox!** You speak sharp arrows! They strike here.”

She seized his hand and laid it against her heart. Frank felt the strong throbbings, and snatched his hand away in some confusion. An awkward silence ensued. It was the first, the last time, in all their intercourse, that love betrayed the proud woman to an acknowledgment of the pangs she suffered.

Before she had time to recover herself, a shout rang through the woods, as if voices were coming that way. Lawontica rose hastily from her seat on the rock, and let fall the curtain between herself and Frank.

The voices came nearer, and two Indians passed, dragging a large deer after them. Lawontica remained motionless as a statue until they were out of sight. Then, without raising the curtain again, she told Frank that these hunters had

* O, the swift arrows!

bought a "beson" of the wolf-manitto, to make them successful in the chase, and now they would make a feast in the village, and, perhaps, would bring him some portion of the game; but that, if he chose to keep within the cave, none would dare intrude, and, if he could imitate the snarl or howling of a wolf, he might avoid speaking to them, and thus his ignorance of their language would not be discovered. He would not be likely to suffer for want of food, since it was so nearly time for the departure of the war-party that an unusual number would visit the cave, to make inquiries about the weather, or obtain other information, which his prophetic powers were supposed to enable him to give. But, she added,

"Sometime, maybe, me come, too, tell you 'bout when we going."

"And you'll bring Agnes with you?" said Frank.

"No," she answered, firmly, "she no come. You no see her till we go."

With these words she left him abruptly; and, since he must perforce submit to her dictation, he resigned himself to make the best of his situation. He scarcely knew the emotion of fear, and the thought of personal danger troubled him very little; but, to his impetuous disposition, being obliged to remain some days, or perhaps weeks, in inaction, was extremely irksome.

His first care was to dispose of the sorcerer. He had no light, and was therefore obliged to defer the business until morning. He then took the wolf-skin from the body, and, by way of precaution, dressed himself in it, although the

touch and smell were far from being agreeable. With some difficulty he dragged the corpse to a neighboring thicket, and left it until he found a hollow in the valley, to which he conveyed it, and covered it, as well as he was able, with brush and stones. He had started very early, but the labor was so great, and his motions so slow in his uncouth dress, that the sun was high before he returned, and he met several hunters going out for game. When he saw them, he dropped upon "all fours," and moved his body as he had seen the creature he imitated do the preceding day. If the deception was not perfect, he passed without much scrutiny, and regained the cavern, where he was glad to throw aside the robe, and rest himself for the remainder of the day.

As had been foretold, he had one or two visitors each day, and carried on quite a trade in charms, of which he found a number hanging around the cave, corresponding to the one Lawontica had left with him. His ingenuity was, at times, severely taxed to understand what they wanted, or to avoid speaking to them in reply to their questions. Fortunately, their reverence for the supposed magician was so great that whatever he did, or failed to do, was submitted to without question. Finding this to be the case, he grew bold, and even imprudent, uttering all sorts of gibbering sounds at times, and, where his limited knowledge of their language made it impossible for him to comprehend them, frightening away his visitors by howls, which they interpreted to be of direful import. The matter was so much like a boy's play, that his natural inclination for mischief had full scope, and

he rather courted than avoided occasions to perform the part he had assumed.

Lawontica came occasionally, but her visits were brief. All the sprightliness and fire of her girlhood seemed to have gone out, and over the spent ashes her heart cowered, shivering in a freezing atmosphere of troubled care.

Three weeks passed in this way. Numbers of warriors and chiefs, from other villages, collected at this rendezvous, together with vagabond whites, who found an Indian life more to their taste than the restraints of civilized society. Agnes was alarmed at their coarse actions and brutal language, and kept close beside Lawontica, accompanying her when she went to collect firewood, or grass and rushes for bedding for the numerous guests. The women of the village had enough to do to provide these. Constant feasting went on in the council-house, for which the young men and boys provided game. Some of the chiefs, indeed, fasted through several days, and watched their dreams, meantime, with great interest; but, when they had one which foretold success, they gorged themselves to make up for past abstinence. The valley resounded with the continual discharge of fire-arms, as the men practised shooting at a mark. Even the women shared the excitement, and wrangling and drunkenness abounded on every side. Nothing could be more unlike the grave, simple life Agnes had imagined as characteristic of the forest tribes.

One afternoon, the two women came down the hillside, Lawontica bearing upon her back a large bundle of fagots,

tied together, and sustained in their place by a leather strap passing across her forehead. Agnes had a smaller bundle, which she carried in her arms. They paused when they reached the edge of the grove, and threw down their burdens, to rest. Agnes sat down beneath a tree, but her companion stood, leaning back her head against the straight stem of a young elm, and, with an expression half sad, half scornful, surveyed the scene before her.

A brisk breeze was blowing. The beams of the declining sun came up the valley in long, slanting rays of yellow radiance, wherein the few trees scattered here and there upon the level swayed, and quivered, and bent, like a bush fixed in the bed of a sudden torrent, overborne by that flood of glory, and dripping light from all their leaves, to blot out their own shadows. Beating against this golden sheen, arose dark clouds of smoke from a fire which had been kindled in the open space behind the lodges. Near the fire, upon a rude framework, hung the head of a deer, the antlers fixed upright, and the skin stretched out, with the legs appended, dangling in the breeze. It was a "manitto," to which the Indians had offered sacrifices during their feasts, pretending to worship the Great Spirit through this image. Before it some young men were dancing, displaying their agility and strength of muscle by the high leaps and bounds they made. A boy sat on the ground, beating time upon a drum formed of a skin stretched over an old brass kettle. The noise mingled with the shouts of the dancers, and the laughter of a party who stood around two men gambling with dice of

painted stones. Children were running about the street, and women were bringing wood for the evening fire.

The Indian girl saw it all, but Agnes had fallen into a revery, with her eyes fixed on the ground. She was startled by Lawontica's voice, speaking in a tone of impatience and regret.

“White man he know more than Indian. Ve'y much he better, 'cause he know more — more he knōw, more he better. But, Indian — seems if more he know, more he devil! Agnes, me sick! Me live no more with my own peoples. Once me live so long with white mans, me forget 'bout Indians. Me t'ink all ve'y good. Now me know better. Indian, poor fool! Me no stay here any more.”

“But, your husband — Tamaque — what will he do? I know you don't love him, but will he let you go?”

Lawontica laughed, bitterly. “He no help himself! He no my friend. What he care? Plenty more squaw 'bout here.”

Agnes was silent. Tamaque, tired of his wife's coldness, had, indeed, seemed lately to care as little for her as she did for him. Returning to the thought always uppermost in her own breast, Agnes asked,

“When shall we go, Lawontica? You promised after the planting month you would take me; and now, see, the green blade is springing up in the corn-field, and yet you say ‘wait.’ I cannot wait much longer. You don't know how important a few days or weeks may be, and I am strong

enough now. I have brought all this wood without being tired. Tell me now when may I go?"

"How will she find her way? There are bears in the woods," said Lawontica, with a mocking laugh.

"You will go with me — you said you would."

It was impossible to resist that confiding tone, and those earnest, beseeching eyes. The dark face grew calm, and even loving in its expression. She drew nearer, and, as she twined Agnes' curls around her fingers, said, softly,

"Ahkie! Snow-bird! No you feel somebody near you, lately?"

"Near me? — no," answered Agnes, looking around, in a little fear. Lawontica laughed at her mistake.

"Ah, then you no love him," she said, and proceeded to tell Agnes that Frank was in the vicinity, waiting for the war-feast to be over, and the warriors gone, and then they would set out together on their journey towards home. This arrangement was necessary, since, otherwise, they might be prevented from going, or pursued if they should steal away, and Agnes had only strength to go, slowly and quietly, a few miles each day.

"And you will go with me?" Agnes asked, when all was explained.

"Do you want me?" asked Lawontica, in return, giving her a searching look.

"O, yes, indeed — Lawontica, you know what I told you — you must come with me," said Agnes, and a sudden blush lit her pallid face with new beauty.

“Me go too, then,” replied her companion, in a grave but decided tone, and, resuming her burden, she went on to the village. Agnes followed close behind her. One or two white men in the crowd were bent upon teasing her; but she escaped from their profane jests, and gained the shelter of Tamaque’s lodge, where they did not find it politic to intrude uninvited.

The war-feast was to be held that evening, and the ensuing morning the parties set off to join their comrades at Onondagua. The near prospect of deliverance from her tedious captivity, and gratitude for the friend who had sought her at such repeated peril of his life, caused her heart to throb with strong emotion. He was so noble, so brave! O, if she could but have loved him!

She remained a long time in the quiet of the lodge, the door closed, the noise outside reaching her ear without disturbing the current of thought flowing through her mind; flowing idly, unheeded, as a stream that bears flowers or thorn-branches past the gaze of a traveller sitting on its banks, and longing to be across it on the opposite shore. Thus images of the past floated through her reverie, but her thoughts took cognizance only of the anxiety of the present, and the uncertainty of the future. Suddenly the door opened, and Tamaque entered. He was half intoxicated, and reeled about the cabin, not seeming to notice her.

He wore an old pair of trousers, over which was pinned, around the waist, a blanket reaching below his knees, profusely ornamented with wampum, feathers, and fox-tails.

His moccasins and leggins were worked to correspond with the blanket. The upper part of his body and his head were entirely naked, and painted one half black and the other red. It was almost impossible to recognize him under this grotesque mask, and Agnes stole away, half terrified, leaving him to readjust his savage finery.

He soon appeared again, having adorned his head with a new tuft of eagle-feathers, and drawn a circle of white paint around each eye. He saw Agnes crouching beside Lawontica in the shadow of the hut, and approached her, brandishing his hatchet, as if he intended at least to frighten her. But Lawontica arose and stood between them, waving him off with an imperious gesture, and saying, scornfully,

“Go away — go dance — go eat your brothers!* Tamaque is a great brave — he likes to take a *woman's* scalp.”

She had spoken in their native tongue, and so rapidly that the sneering words were but half comprehended, or the hatchet might have descended on her own head. He answered, in broken English, for Agnes' benefit,

“Me no want 'um. Maybe me bring back twenty just like um. You see!”

Then, sounding the war-whoop, he sprang away to join the revellers.

The saturnalia had now reached its height. A hog and several dogs had been killed, and the raw flesh devoured, the warriors holding up the dripping pieces, and shouting to each

* An allusion to the hogs and dogs, usually sacrificed at a war-feast. Dog-flesh was supposed to inspire them with valor.

other, "Thus will I chew and eat my enemies." Others seized the heads and bones, swung them in the air, with loud yells, and thrust them into the faces of the circle of spectators surrounding the group, vaunting the feats of valor they intended to perform.

Near the frame on which the deer's head was fixed they had erected a pole, painted a brilliant red, and hung with scalps. Around it a space was left a few yards in diameter. Into this the head chief stepped, and commenced reciting his own warlike deeds, and those of his ancestors. His tones were shrill and monotonous, and at each falling cadence, as he closed his long sentences, he brandished his tomahawk, and cut a deep gash in the pole. One after another followed him, while the drinking, shouting, and whooping, was going on in the crowd outside the circle. After several hours consumed in this way, the warriors all joined in dancing around the pole, yelling, gesticulating furiously, as if possessed by the extremity of rage, threatening to cut and stab each other, bending their bodies in the most uncouth postures, and appearing, as the lurid firelight shone over their paint and feathers, and the hideous din of fife and drum mingled with their discordant voices, like a band of demons just let loose from the nether world.

Agnes crouched by the side of her friend, not daring to remain in the hut alone, and unable to turn her eyes from the horrible fascination of the scene before her. Lawontica said but little, and when she did speak her words were full of bitterness. Her coldness for Tamaque had changed into a

hate so deep, that she was glad to see him thus brutalize himself, and justify her anger and her scorn. So the long night wore away.

As morning approached, Puschiis suddenly broke from the throng, and commenced marching towards the other end of the valley, where a path led off into the woods towards the north. His chiefs followed in single file, and when the village was left behind they paused, fired their guns into the air, and began the war-song, marching again as they sung. This was the signal of their final departure. They had dressed and armed themselves completely for the expedition the preceding evening, and now set out, without taking any rest, after the excessive exercise of the war-dance.

The women of the village ran on in disorderly groups, carrying the bags of "*citamon*," a mixture of pounded Indian corn and maple-sugar, which was the only food they took in their war-parties, the forest supplying them with meat. The young men only waited to gather the bones left from the feast and throw them into the fire, that the dogs might not get them.

As Agnes saw this abrupt termination of the revels, she asked, with surprise,

"Do the women go to war, too?"

"They go a little way. Then, after one night, they come back. I must go, too," said Lawontica, rising and taking up the *citamon* she had prepared for her husband.

"You? — O, Lawontica! and leave me alone?" exclaimed Agnes, seizing her hand.

"You no be frightened, snow-bird!" said the Indian woman; in a softer tone, as she gazed upon that uplifted face. "Nobody be left here to hurt you — only some old squaw and some sick. Rest all gone. Me go. Me see Tamaque once more. When he come back he no find me here. Maybe he angly then. Think white mans cally me off — go kill somebody, maybe. Now me see him. Me tell him 'bout it."

"What will you tell him?"

"Me say, When me young girl, you say, me be your squaw never you dlink lum, 'cause it steal away your think; never you beat me, never you speak bad word; always you ve'y kind, 'cause you love me so much. Now you dlink, one, two, five time; now you speak me bad, you no care for me. I no live with you. You get 'nother squaw. I go 'way, and you no find me."

"Where are you going?" asked Agnes. "He can surely find you, if you live with us."

Lawontica heaved a deep breath, and looked up to the stars, now slowly fading in the gray of dawn.

"The Great Spirit is good," she said. "He will take care of his child. When she lives again he will make her a bird, maybe, that she may have a glad heart, and sing all day."

Agnes but half understood the meaning of these words.

"God will take care of us both, I hope," she said, doubtfully, adding, "but now, just now, Lawontica, what do you mean to do? Will he not guess where you are going, and follow us?"

“Tamaque is a great brave. Will he leave the war-trail to look after two women? No, Agnes. Me tell him how me go 'way not with white man. White man, Indian, all one bad to Lawontica!”

She sighed as she spoke, and, bidding Agnes have no fear of harm, advised her to go into the lodge and sleep all day, that she might be ready for the journey they were to commence on the morrow. Then, taking her bag of food, she went after the crowd, who were now out of sight, although the notes of the war-song could still be heard.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SNOW-BIRD FLIES HOME.

IN his cave upon the mountain Frank Grey heard the mingled noises of the war-dance, and, though the feasting of the preceding week, described to him by Lawontica in her visits, had given him some idea of what Indian ceremonies might be, he could hardly tell the meaning of the increased din, or of the unusual silence that followed when the war-party had withdrawn.

Lawontica had given him a strict charge not to venture out of the cave in the daytime. His disguise might suffice in the dim light in which he was seen by those who sought him there; but his imitations of the real wolf-manitto must necessarily be imperfect, and, the change once suspected, his life was not safe a moment. In spite of this, he could not at day-break leave the overhanging shelf of rock from whence he had looked down upon the village through the last hours of night. By the firelight he could see the savage dancers, and all others who came and went within the circle of its radiance, but into the deep shadows around his glance could not penetrate. When the warriors marched away he felt a moment-

ary relief; but his surprise at seeing the women follow after was mingled with a slight fear that Lawontica might again be false, and place Agnes out of his reach. Ensnconced behind the large rocks upon the verge of the precipice, he waited until daylight showed him the village deserted of its inhabitants. The few who remained, and Agnes among the rest, had retired to obtain the repose which the noise of the war-feast had rendered impossible during the night. No smoke ascended from the lodges, and no one was seen in the streets for several hours.

In his impatience he would at once have descended to the lodges; but the stream, as it skirted the base of the mountain, was too deep for fording, and he knew it would be impossible to swim in the uncomfortable constraint of his wolf-skin robe. There was a ford, lower down, where the valley widened; but of this he was ignorant, and anxiety had nearly overcome the last reserves of prudence, and determined him to throw off his disguise, swim the stream, and ascertain if Agnes were really there, when, as he reached the bank, he spied a canoe snugly moored among some rushes. To enter it and paddle to the other side was the work of but a few moments. Then, assuming the most wolfish gait he could remember, he passed slowly along towards the lodge.

A few children playing in the sand, and some women lying in the doors of their wigwams, saw the dreaded creature immediately, and looked with a trembling curiosity to know what the unwonted visit might portend. Thus unmolested he reached Lawontica's lodge. Agnes had just risen from her

couch after a prolonged slumber, and when the well-remembered wolf's head looked in the open doorway, she could not repress a scream of terror. She knew it was not the thing she feared, but the old recollection was too powerful to be overcome at once by a later knowledge. The women, who had cautiously followed, at a little distance, heard her scream, and shrank back in alarm.

"Don't be afraid, little Red Riding-Hood, I won't eat you up; for I an't your grandmother, though I am a wolf," said Frank, in his own cheery voice.

It sounded strangely through those savage jaws. Agnes laughed, involuntarily, but at the same time she exclaimed,

"For heaven's sake, don't talk English! They will recognize it, though they don't understand it, and suspect who you are. Why did you come? You are in danger here."

"Not if you will keep on wringing your hands, and looking so much as if you were scared out of your senses. See how frightened those women look, merely to see you."

As he spoke, he turned his head slowly, gnashing his wolf-jaws at the squaws behind him. Then, rising on his feet, he pawed the air a few moments, and then curled himself down inside the door.

"That was well done," he continued, quite enjoying the fun of his novel situation. "It served a double purpose,—to let my brains run down into my heels once more, and keep those beauties from coming near enough to hear us talk. You seem to be quite comfortable here, Agnes. Upon my word, this is a very decent house."

“How can you run on so? Suppose they should hear you, — they would know you was n't an Indian,” said Agnes, anxiously.

“Why so? Don't wolves talk English? If you'll tell me the wolf for ‘I'm thankful to see you once more, and to find you safe and well,’ I'll say it over and over again to you, Agnes. If you don't, you must let me say it in my native tongue — Here, you!”

He interrupted himself to make a little sortie at the women and children gathering nearer, and when his howls and gestures had driven them back, exclaimed,

“There, that was well done! Don't you think I must have been a wolf in some former state of existence?”

“I'm sorry not to be complimentary, but you don't howl in the least like a wolf,” replied Agnes, laughing nervously. “I've listened to them many a time this winter, in stormy nights. O, it is awful to hear them!”

“Well, if I an't perfect, it is the best I can do, and ‘angels can no more,’ as Percy says, — I doubt if they could hardly so much! Where has Lawontica gone? I thought she had carried you off again, and that was the reason I ventured here. Not much of a venture, after all, with only these few old women to see me.”

“But the young men may return at any time, and they would not be so easily deceived. Indeed, Frank, you are not safe,” said Agnes, earnestly.

“I don't care if I an't. I'm happy, and that's better. Sit here, where that old squaw peeking in the window can't

see you so plainly, and wring your hands once in a while, and look frightened. Then we're safe enough. Now tell me about yourself. Have you been here all winter? Somehow, I could never make Lawontica talk about you."

"Here she comes, now, sooner than she said," cried Agnes, and in another moment Lawontica came to the lodge with a slow and weary step.

She had overtaken the groups who followed the warriors, and gone with them until, after a few miles, they halted to rest. This was their custom when setting out on a long journey. After their fatigue was abated, the feasting and dancing of the preceding night were renewed, and continued to a late hour. Then those who accompanied them returned home, and the next morning the war-party went forward to their place of destination. Lawontica had taken advantage of this interval of quiet to have the interview she wished with Tamaque. The moment was ill-chosen, if she had any lingering wish to touch his heart. Weary and half intoxicated, he listened in sulky indifference, and turned his back upon her when she had done. She waited for no further repulse, but left him, and retraced her steps to the village. As she approached the lodge, her quick eye caught a glimpse of the wolf-skin, and at once divined the truth.

She paused at the door with well-feigned reverence, and, taking from her neck a string of wampum, laid it on the ground. Frank clawed it up, as he supposed he was expected to do. The old women looking on began to make remarks that showed their suspicions were not yet aroused, and Lawon-

tica, with ready wit, devised a plan to profit by their ignorance and superstition.

Approaching nearer, and speaking low, she said,

“S’pose ’um you wolf-manitto, you one great man — ve’y strong. S’pose you look at me, I no look away. S’pose you say me go with you, then me go. Me have no power not to — nobody able to hold me, ’cause your eye so strong. Now this the best time to go. To-night the boys come home, and the young men. Maybe they say me no go. S’pose ’um you go out and we go after now.”

Frank caught eagerly at the idea. A few more words perfected the plan. She busied herself in preparing food, part of which she laid before her guest, who ate it in the presence of spectators with all the gravity becoming a wolf-manitto, and as much of comfort as was consistent with that character. The two women then ate their supper, and before they had finished the wolf-manitto suddenly arose, pawed the air, and howled direfully. Lawontica acted her part well, and Agnes went beside her, too really frightened, lest they should be stopped or suspected, to need to put on the show of fear. Frank walked before, turning occasionally, raising himself up, howling and gesticulating towards them; and they followed with slow, reluctant steps, as if drawn on by some power superior to their own will. Thus they gained the canoe, and were paddled across the stream. A few steps on the opposite bank carried them within the shelter of the trees.

The frightened women who looked on thought them under

the spell of the sorcerer, and dared not interfere. Their abrupt departure, without the slightest apparent preparation, forbade the idea of a voluntary act; and, as they were never seen again, their fate passed into a tradition. To the latest generations of Delawares, stories were told of the powerful sorcerer who lived among the hills, who could assume any form he chose, and had power to compel any one to follow him by merely casting upon them a glance of his terrible eyes. And many a moralizing old Indian, crooning out his tales by the lodge-fire on a winter night, has related the history of the haughty maiden, who, because she was too proud to fulfil the lowly duties of her sex, was thus charmed away and miserably destroyed.

Lawontica might have treated her captive with any degree of indulgence, so long as she retained her among the tribe; but, knowing she would meet with opposition, if now, in time of war, she attempted to restore Agnes to her friends, she had intended to leave the village simply as if going out for a brief absence. Thus she had previously conveyed to the cave some bags of *citamon*, and a few articles indispensable for the comfort of their journey.

When they reached the cavern, these were hastily made into two bundles, Frank taking one, and Lawontica the other. The wolf-skin robe he had gladly thrown off on reaching the shelter of the woods, and, having secreted it in a crevice of the rocks, he shouldered his gun and led the way along the path by which he had come from the white settlements.

They walked fast until it was too dark to see their way,

and arose early the next morning; but, as the day advanced, the fear of pursuit gradually left them, and they went on more slowly, and encamped early to rest. After this the journey was more like a pleasure excursion than like the flight of prisoners. The war had taken all the hunters and warriors in another direction, and the primeval forest through which their path lay was as free from danger as if no turbulent human life had ever disturbed the quiet of its glades.

The weather was delightful. It was the last week in May, and the queen of months had been profuse in adorning her fair domain, the earth. Blossoming shrubs leaned out from the thickets towards the open sunlit spots, and the dark banks of moss and the leaf-strewn ground were starred with flowers. Delicate vines and pale-green lichens covered the broken stumps and fallen trees, and through the full-leaved branches above came down a clear, soft light, that was neither sunshine nor shadow, but seemed woven of both.

The woods were full of fragrance and sound. Morning and evening the birds led forth their young upon the branches, singing and twittering in an ecstasy of parental joy. Squirrels and hares started up from the turf, or ran across the path, with broods of tiny blind creatures following, to be pushed or pulled over stump and rock, and hidden safely from the intruding footsteps. Sometimes a deer broke out of the covert, and stood staring at them an instant with his large brown eyes, before he dashed away. Now and then a fox came in sight; or a rustling of the bushes, and some strange odor, startled them with the fear of more savage animals;

but no accident occurred to mar their pleasure. The springs gushing everywhere supplied them with water, the citamombags furnished bread, and Frank's gun provided more substantial food. When they were weary they stopped to rest, and at evening a fire was kindled, branches were cut down for beds, and a rude hut constructed, in which the women slept, while Frank, wrapped in his blanket, lay beside the fire and kept it burning until morning.

Frank's elastic spirits, rebounding from the depression they had endured, found occasion for merriment in all the various incidents of their journey; and, as Agnes had much to ask, and he to tell, of what had transpired during her absence, there was no lack of conversation. Yet the silent one of the party, Lawontica, who watched them both with eyes sharpened by love and sorrow, read many a thought which was unspoken, many a deep feeling that found utterance only in trifling words.

One evening they built their fire upon the shore of a pond, about twenty miles from Morristown. The next day would bring them to the close of their journey, and the knowledge, bringing with it thoughts and purposes which had been for a while laid aside, casting upon them again the burden of social life, and ending these careless, pleasant hours, made them unusually quiet.

Their encampment was upon a little mound, two or three rods from the shore of the pond. Behind them a tangled heap of fallen trees, through which young trees, in their turn, were growing, formed a barricade against the forest, while

around large elms and maples stood in a circle. Several light showers had fallen during the afternoon, and the night was misty and intensely dark. A fire kindled in the centre of the little opening had no power to pierce or illumine the shadows that seemed to stand solid and palpable, like a wall, around. From it the trunks of the trees came out in alto relievo, and the arching branches and white under-surfaces of the leaves, revealed as one looked upward, were like rafters and corbels richly carved to support a roof of ebony.

Frank, who came up from the shore, which he had been pacing in a restless mood, paused before he entered the lighted circle, that he might gaze unreprieved upon the face he loved. Agnes, leaning upon her elbow, lay half within and half without the little hut of saplings where their bed had been made. The ruddy gleam, shining over her, tinged her pale cheek, and turned her golden hair to brown. Never before or after did she look to him so beautiful; never did his impetuous heart so yearn for the fulfilment of hopes it had dared to cherish.

While he looked, Lawontica, who sat beside the fire, suddenly lifted her head, and, after a scrutinizing glance around, as if to assure herself they were alone, said,

“Snow-bird, you know what you tell me, that night I take you from old Akzie?”

Agnes started, and half arose from her reclining posture.

“Hush! — What of it?” she asked, breathlessly.

“You tell it me one time after; was it true?”

Agnes nodded assent.

“Did you tell Flank?”

“Tell *him*? — No! Why?”

“Maybe you tell him, he no look at you so much, he no ache so bad *here*.” She beat her hands against her bosom, as she spoke, and the gesture gave power to her words.

Agnes colored violently, and then grew pale as death.

“There was a reason,” she said, hesitatingly. “My whole happiness, my whole hope, might depend upon being able to say I had kept this secret till the time came when another might reveal it; or, if that could never be, the life or death of another might depend upon this secret dying with me Lawontica, do you think I ought to tell him?”

The Indian woman regarded her scornfully.

“Then you no care, s’pose ’um he feel bad?”

Agnes was silent a moment, and her white face quivered with the rush of painful feeling.

“O,” she exclaimed, “what a price we pay for loving! What slaves we are — we women — to the will of the one beloved! We are ready to check our best impulses, to call evil good and good evil, rather than risk the happiness which is our life!”

Then, as she met Lawontica’s look of surprise, she added, more calmly,

“He will know all soon — too soon. To-morrow, perhaps, or the next day, will decide my fate. Frank is noble-hearted and good. When he knows I am ——”

“Stop!” he interrupted, leaning forward from the shadow where he had stood, as if spell-bound, listening, half unconsciously, craving, not to know the fatal secret, but to learn if

in any case, under any circumstances, there was love in her heart for him.

“Stop, Agnes! What you have said has revealed nothing, and I am glad of it. Do not trouble yourself for me. The pain I have borne I can still bear, and God forbid that for my sake you should add one moment of sorrow to your own life!”

He drew back into the shadow, and was about to turn away, when Lawontica recalled him. She had risen slowly while he was speaking, and now stood erect, with her arms folded over her breast, her head thrown back, looking not at him nor at Agnes, but into the darkness beyond, whence came the wail of the night-wind, and the ceaseless dash of the waves upon the pebbled shore. Her voice was cold and her face calm, but her keen black eyes burned like fire, and something of repressed excitement in her manner supplied the emotion she forbade her lips to utter.

“I see the end of the trail,” she said. “The way is not long. One sun can finish it. Good. You no want Lawontica any more. To-moller she go, and you no see her no more.”

“Why, what is this?” replied Frank, as she paused. “You must come to the farm with us. My mother will be glad to see you, and old Sanoso was there when I left home. They will all thank you for helping Agnes back again.”

She smiled incredulously, shook her head, and said,

“Who set a trap to catch the snow-bird?”

“We don’t know,” replied Frank, adopting her figurative

language. "We only know who made the cage warm, and the bird safe, and, when summer came, opened the doors that she might fly."

Lawontica looked pleased, but she simply repeated,

"There is no more need of the Indian woman. She will go away."

"You know we want you," said Agnes, reproachfully; "and Sanoso expects you too—the poor old woman! Why will you disappoint us all? Where can you go, if you leave us? You say you will never return to your husband."

"The Great Spirit is good. He will do what is best with Lawontica. She is not afraid to go to him. It is better than to stay here."

Her low, quiet voice was awful to hear, as she said these words. Frank had been told that the Monsey Indians, a tribe of the Delawares, were in the frequent habit of using poison, both to rid themselves of their enemies, and to put an end to their own existence in moments of disappointment or grief. But he hardly knew to what an extent the practice had been adopted by the other tribes, and, though the idea crossed his mind, he could scarcely believe this to be her meaning. Yet he replied, gravely,

"The Great Spirit is angry with those who take life, except in self-defence. Surely you do not mean to chew that poisonous root which I have heard your people sometimes use?"

"The Great Spirit made it. He show 'um his red children where it grow. He know sometimes they want ve'y

much come to him when he busy and not hear 'um cry, so he show 'um how the door open. S'pose 'um I open the door, I go into the happy land. No white man there. White man's heaven great way off. Never he trouble Indian there."

"Do you really think you will go to the happy land, if you kill yourself?" asked Agnes, in a tone strangely made up of fear and longing.

"Yes, me go there. Maybe me stay, maybe me come back. Take some other form, live a new life. Never trouble any more 'bout this old life me throw away."

"You are wild, Lawontica. You must not talk so," said Frank, earnestly. "If you are weary of life, it is because you do not understand the true sources of enjoyment. Come and live with Sanoso in the pleasant valley, and let my mother teach you to read, and to live like a Christian woman. You have no right to end your days, if you are tired of them. But I take this matter too seriously. You cannot mean what you have said."

A bitter, scornful smile passed over her face, and for an instant the smothered flame broke out.

"Lawontica will not be a Christian—never! Never oil and water mix. Always white man hold his head high, and trample on poor Indian. Many my people, they take the white man's God, they learn books, they live like the Great Spirit had not made them Indian. What good? White man burn their town, drive them way off to the sunset. Lawontica will not have the white man's God!

The Great Spirit made her Indian. He know what is good for Indian. Lawontica is not afraid to go to him."

She sat down again by the fire, turning herself a little from them, to signify the discussion was ended. In vain they employed argument and entreaty to obtain from her a promise to forego her purpose. She said little more, but after a time went into the tent of boughs and lay down, as if to sleep. Agnes followed and lay down beside her, clasping her arms closely around her neck, that she might be sure to wake if Lawontica stirred. Many thoughts excited her, and drove away sleep. She listened long to the wind, rising and falling in mournful cadences, as it swept over the lake into the forest; to the clanging cry of the loon, and the lapping of the waters against the beach with a sound like the whisperings and the muffled tread of an approaching multitude. By her side the Indian woman breathed calm and softly, as if in deep repose.

Before daylight Agnes aroused from what seemed but a moment of forgetfulness, to find herself alone. She lifted her head from the rude pillow, and her cry of dismay awoke Frank from his slumber by the fire. Lawontica was nowhere to be seen. They called her, and only the echoes from the woods replied. As she had chosen to leave them thus, each felt it would be in vain to seek her; and slowly and reluctantly, often pausing to listen and look back, with many a comment suggested alike by hope and fear concerning her, they pursued their journey to Morristown.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE KEY IN THE LOCK.

IN the complication of human affairs there is nothing more singular than the way in which persons apparently disconnected are, by a long series of events, that seem to have no bearing upon their ultimate destiny, brought together at certain times and places, where each is, in the highest sense, indispensable to the other. Chance never produced combinations so evidently the result of an intelligent design; and one who looks thoughtfully at the course of life recognizes a superior power controlling actions meant to be independent, and regulating according to His own will the motions of beings who fancy themselves free to will and to do as they please.

At the same hour Frank and Agnes approached Morris-town, travellers from another direction drove up to the tavern there. It was a day to tempt one out of doors, and the "stoop," along the shady side of the house, was filled with loungers, who used the loungers' self-elected privilege to stare at the new comers. The vehicle was nothing more ostentatious than a farmer's heavy, yellow-painted wagon, and the

jaded and dusty horses told by their reeking sides of the heavy and sandy roads over which they had passed; but the driver, a jaunty-looking colored boy, made a futile attempt to excite them into a gallop, that he might make a sensation along the village street, and draw up in style before the tavern door. In truth, Juniper — for it was no other — felt himself very much aggrieved at being compelled to drive an equipage so little in accordance with what he conceived to be the dignity of the Chester family. But the coach-horses were too valuable to risk in the frail ferry-boat which transported travellers across the river, or to leave in a city subject to martial law, and exposed to the chances of war. Therefore they had reluctantly been sold, together with the house on Broadway and its furniture, and Mr. Chester left New York with a determination never again to reside within its limits. From the Indian depredations they had feared in their country home he might protect himself; but who could save him or his daughter from the cunning of the bad man who had held over them such fearful power, if he found them in the city on his return?

Except when tidings came of Col. Stanley's wound, and the dangerous and prolonged illness that followed, Evelyn and her father had held little conversation respecting him. Mr. Chester well knew how her delicate sense of honor made her shrink from violating her promise, but his more worldly ideas joined with his deep affection in persuading him that a vow so extorted possessed no moral power. In any event, it was safer that, meeting under such circumstances, they should

meet, if possible, upon equal ground ; and, hearing that Col. Stanley, being now convalescent, was about to be exchanged for an American officer, he hastened his preparations for removal, that the *ultima ratio* might no longer remain in his enemy's hands.

With quiet gladness Evelyn had yielded to his wishes. In the depths of her own sad heart she knew that only one thing could release her from the obligation she had assumed, and of that she had no expectation ; yet she was pleased to return to her old home, if but for a short time, and to be sure that her father was safe from harm ; and a certain pride and dignity in her nature made her prefer, since she must be immolated, to approach the altar as a victim self-constrained to the sacrifice, rather than to be forced there by the iron will of another.

A character like hers, so strong, so equipoised upon loftiest principles, so moved by purest emotions, secures its possessor from being made wholly miserable by the darkest fate ; and in the months that followed the great struggle and crisis of her life there was little to indicate the storm she had endured. The secret lay heavy in her soul, but could not cloud her brow. Perhaps she was more quiet, and when she spoke her voice took a lower tone ; but she was not less cheerful, less thoughtful of others, less devoted to the minute cares that make up the sum of daily comfort, than in her happiest days. Yet her father grew almost impatient at this reticence, against which he could not argue ; and, nervous beneath the weight of his own vacillating purposes, half resented the

firmness, by which in some unaccountable manner she seemed to have passed from under his control. Even in her stature she appeared to have grown taller and more womanly than before. He could no longer feel that she was his "little girl;" and there had never been so few confidential hours, so scanty an amount of home comfort between them, as in the winter succeeding the event which should have united them more closely than ever.

Fortunately, Evelyn was hardly conscious of this. The strong patience wherewith she had clothed herself shielded her from the touch of minor discomforts. It was as if her soul — her proper existence — had gone forward to a certain point, whereto she was borne slowly and steadily on by each revolving day — the moment when she should meet Col. Stanley, and receive her destiny from his lips.

Thus it was with an excitement suppressed, yet scarcely controllable, that these two rode through the street of the little town. Evelyn muffled her shawl about her, and concealed her face behind a thick veil, that she might not meet a casual glance; while Mr. Chester looked eagerly around, in hope to recognize the man upon whose efficient aid he relied in bringing his daughter "to her senses."

Beside these, there was a fourth person in the wagon, whose buxom face peered from the depths of an immense bonnet of Dunstable straw, set in a formidable array of muslin cap-border, plaited and crimped. She grasped the side of the jolting carriage, and leaned over, at the imminent risk of falling, to gain an earlier view of some one standing in the

open doorway, as they passed with a flourish executed in Juniper's grandest manner; and, when the horses were stopped, after a break-neck curve, and backing of the wheels, to admit of an easier descent, she scrambled down, utterly regardless of etiquette, and, running up the steps, precipitated herself upon the neck of the astonished youth, exclaiming,

“O, Jem, Jem! — to think, arter all, you been and fit agin' yer lawful king!”

“Why, marm! is this you? — I han't, now!” urged Jem, struggling to free himself from her affectionate embrace, after having returned it somewhat awkwardly, in the consciousness of twenty eyes attracted that way.

“O, Jem, don't lie now, that's a good boy! An' this here blessed war, that they've been a prayin' for in all the churches — to think you've gone an' took the wrong side on't — and sich good wage as you was a gettin', too!”

“Why, marm, I han't, I tell you. I jes' been stayin' round, waitin'. I'm a valley, now, for the Major — you know — Major Grey — I'm his valley!”

“His valley! — I think he better valley you. Your work is worth consid'able. What wage does you get?”

“Well, we an't pertic'lar 'bout that, cause you see how the Major is out o' pocket, jest now.”

“An't pertic'lar 'bout the wage!” exclaimed Mrs. Henderson, releasing his neck, that she might hold up both hands in horror. “What pays your board, then? — how do you live?”

“I forages for him, and that does for board an' lodgin'. We eats ourselves when we don't get rations, but most o'

times the rations eats us, and I camps down on a blanket before the fire in his room."

"My soul!" exclaimed the widow, — "six good feather-beds at home, an' you sleepin' on the floor! O, Jem, Jem! that 's all 'long o' fightin' agin yer lawful king!" and again she precipitated herself on his neck, in a paroxysm of emotion.

"Don't, marm! — you choke me," gasped Jem, quite red in the face.

"O, come home, Jem — come home with me! This here blessed war — it'll be the makin' o' us, if you'll only come home, an' get a good place like that you had to the jail! I left the shop in good hands — you han't asked for it yet, Jem! — till I gets back — if you'll only come with me! I reckon they'll take you into the Sugar-House agin, now."

"No doubt about that, marm — the trouble might be 'bout gettin' out again."

"Come home then, Jem! O, do!"

"Don't be a fool, marm!" said Jem, affectionately, striving again to unclasp her arms.

"He calls me a fool!" cried she, in joyful tones, that greatly amused the bystanders. "Now I know he'll go with me! Come, Jem — I come all the way from York to find ye."

"I would n't start to-night, marm — there 's bears in the woods, and they might catch us, and I'd rather eat a bear than have him eat me. Come in and get some tea — that is — sich as we has instead o' tea."

His endeavors might have been unsuccessful, so absorbed was she in the one idea which had prompted her journey but

at this moment Mr. Chester came up, with Evelyn leaning on his arm. Mrs. Henderson released her son's neck, and moved aside that they might pass. Jem, who had been burning with impatience, darted through a side door, and, running up stairs at a bound, flung open the door of a small bedroom, where Percy Grey was sitting.

"Somebody wants you, sir, down stairs."

Percy looked up from his writing, in surprise; but Jem had subsided from his brief excitement into an every-day expression that revealed nothing, and quietly added,

"It's a gentleman, in the parlor."

"You came up so quick, I thought there might be news of Agnes. Who is the gentleman?"

"He didn't give his name. Shall I ask him up?"

"No — I'll go down!" and he went out, leaving Jem chuckling over the success of his scheme for an agreeable surprise. He heard his mother's voice calling him in the entry, but had no fears she would be recognized by "the Major." In this, however, he was mistaken. Something in the woman's face struck him as familiar, and, as he paused, she again called Jem, with all the force of a pair of sound English lungs.

"If it is Jem Henderson you wish to see, I will send him to you in a moment," said Major Grey, pausing, as he passed her.

"Yes — it's him, and nobody else — the runaway boy that's breakin' his mother's heart a fightin' agin his lawfu' king! He says he's Major Grey's valley; but I guess he

don't valley him much, for not a wage does he give him — an' he a sleepin' on bare boards, poor lad, an' me havin' six good feather-beds to home — an' he a eating rations, an' me a livin' on the fat o' the land — an' *real* tea, besides, if 't is war-time!"

In vain the impatient listener attempted to stay the flood of her loud words with the questions he longed to ask; and at that moment Jem appearing on the stairs, she darted away to pounce upon him, and overwhelm him again with entreaties and caresses.

Percy passed on to the parlor. The conjectures which crowded upon him almost took away his breath, but they prepared him to recognize the form, still closely veiled, standing beside the window.

Evelyn turned at the sound of the opening door, thinking her father had entered. He could not see her face, but she trembled violently, and the hand she extended towards him was cold as ice. He grasped and retained it. She made no effort to withdraw it. For a few moments neither spoke. Then, glancing at the other hand, Percy saw it was without a wedding-ring. He breathed more freely, and found voice to say,

"You are not married! Why, then, have you not answered any of my letters?"

"Have you written any?"

"Can you ask it? Have you never received them?"

"Never. I feared — O, Percy, it was hardest of all to fear that, perhaps, after all, you, too, thought me wrong —"

“Wrong! noblest, dearest, could you have such a thought?”

“Forgive me! I have suffered so much, my feelings have grown morbid. Perhaps it was treachery—it may have been the fortunes of war—but I have not had a line from you since—” Her voice failed, and beneath her veil he saw that she was weeping. He led her to a chair, and sat down beside her. When he could command his voice, he asked,

“What did you think of me?”

“I could not blame you, since my father also refuses to allow that my ideas are right; but—”

“You was disappointed?”

She nodded her head in assent, for tears choked her words.

It was mere accident that their tête-à-tête had not sooner been interrupted; and now strangers coming in prevented further conversation, and Evelyn had time to attain some degree of self-possession before her father entered.

He greeted Percy very cordially, evidently gratified to find him so soon at his daughter's side; and, with a significant glance, informed him that, finding he could obtain good rooms at the hotel, he should remain some days.

Some further desultory conversation followed between the gentlemen, until Juniper appeared, with his most obsequious bow, and a grand air, intended to impress the spectators.

“De room is preparationed, Miss Ebelyn, in de bery best extent, and de landlady say, my Miss' please come up.”

Evelyn arose to go, but at that moment there was a bustle of exclamations and congratulations at the door, and several persons crowded into the little parlor. Among them, talking

eagerly, and replying to a dozen questions at once, was a young man in huntsman's dress, upon whose arm leaned a slight girlish figure, whose delicate complexion and golden curls, contrasting strongly with the Indian dress she wore, together with her timid air, shrinking from the observation she attracted, made her an object of picturesque and peculiar interest.

"Frank! Agnes!" exclaimed Percy Grey, and sprang forward to meet them, his fine face animated and glowing with pleasure.

"It is you, Percy! Now, this is great luck! I feared you might be gone, when I heard the general had left."

"A small detachment of us are left behind to attend to the exchange of some prisoners. But you — we began to be seriously alarmed about you."

"O, no fear of me. I'm bound to come out right side up; you know; it's my luck. But let me find a chair for Agnes. She must be tired almost to death, for we've had a tramp to-day that might tire an Indian."

He looked at her, as he spoke, with an evident admiration that called a blush to her cheek; and, as a dozen chairs had now been offered to her, she glided from his side, and sat down near to where Evelyn was standing.

An instinctive sympathy made the latter throw back her veil as she turned to speak to her; and Percy, who had followed to introduce them to each other, could not but observe the contrast between Agnes' wan, faded loveliness and Miss Chester's serene and majestic beauty. Passing over the

indefinite point — Agnes' name — as lightly as might be, he said,

“ Agnes, this is Miss Chester, who I am sure will be interested to know that you have been for some time under my mother's protection.” Then, turning to Evelyn, he added, “ Two months ago she was stolen from our house by a party of Indians, and my brother has but just returned successful in his attempt to release her. This will account for the peculiar dress she wears.”

“ It is very becoming, certainly,” said Evelyn, with a smile, “ but I think hardly so comfortable for the house as for the forest. If you will come with me to my chamber, perhaps I can furnish you with a more commonplace garb.”

“ She'll be very thankful for it to-morrow morning, I've no doubt,” said Frank, as Agnes was about to speak; “ but now my advice is that she should lie down and keep quiet to-night, for she'll be ill if she don't.”

“ At least,” said Agnes, in a low voice, “ I may thank you now for the shelter of your room until my own is ready. I don't know any of these people, and —— ” she hesitated, and Evelyn added,

“ You don't fancy being made '*une lionne malgré lui.*' I sympathize in the annoyance; so let us leave these gentlemen, if you please.” And, with a graceful bend, she drew Agnes' arm within her own, and passed through the circle, following Juniper, who marshalled the way to a chamber, the largest and most commodious in the house.

Their absence gave a liberty for the gratification of a

curiosity which had been restrained while Frank was busy with his fair charge, and Mr. Chester and Percy were interested to hear the details of the capture and escape. At length the story was finished, and the group of idlers scattered to enjoy the luxury of imparting the news they had acquired.

“And now,” said Frank Grey, “I must see what sort of accommodations the landlady has furnished Agnes; and then, ho! for a horse, and a gallop over to the farm.”

“I am glad to hear you say so,” rejoined his brother. “They have been not a little anxious about you, and will be rejoiced to know of Agnes’ safety.”

“Yes, no doubt mother ’ll be so glad to see me, she ’ll bake me as large a loaf of gingerbread as she does you when you come home. Dear soul, she thought ’t would n’t be too good for you if ’t was *all* ’lasses. Nothing like making your friends trouble, if you want to know how much they think of you. Won’t you come, too, Percy?”

“I can’t well leave my command here. The exchange of prisoners takes place day after to-morrow, and then we march immediately.”

“Ah! then I must go with you. And I think I’ll stay at home to-night, and pack up my traps, so as not to be obliged to go over again. You look after Agnes’ comfort while I’m gone. I’ll get father to come over and carry her back with him. But first let me go and see how she’s situated.”

At that moment the landlady, who had been waiting for an opportunity to speak, peeped into the room, and, seeing it nearly vacant, entered to say that she had no room for the

last young lady except one which opened out of the bed-room Mr. Chester had engaged, and so the first young lady was going to take that, and let her father have the big chamber which was engaged for her; and so everybody would be suited, for the big chamber had a fireplace in it, and would do to be used instead of the private parlor Mr. Chester wanted and could n't have. She was sure the gentleman would like it; and as the evenings were cold, would he like a fire built up there now, and perhaps he would like tea there?

She was so extremely smiling and affable that a more objectionable arrangement could hardly have been opposed, when offered with so much suavity; and Mr. Chester signified his acquiescence in all her propositions, at the same time inviting Frank and Percy to take tea with him. The latter accepted the invitation, and withdrew immediately to attend to some military duties; but Frank said,

“Thank you, no, sir. I'm in a good dress for a fancy ball, but will hardly answer for the tea-table, being more picturesque than cleanly. Besides, I'm in a hurry; so, if the landlady will give me a bite of something, I'll be off. But first I must see Agnes a minute.”

Mr. Chester, who had an instant liking for the young man's ingenuous face and frank bearing, offered to conduct him up stairs, adding, as they went,

“I did not understand the name by which your young lady was introduced to my daughter.”

“Miss Strange — Agnes Strange,” said Frank, quickly.

“She has been with your mother some time, your brother said. Is she a relative?”

“No, sir, unless friendship makes relationship. My mother loves her as if she was a daughter.”

“Perhaps she will yet bear that title?” said Mr. Chester, courteously.

Frank bit his lip, but made no answer. His companion thought he was annoyed at the remark, and hastened to apologize for the liberty he had taken.

“No offence, sir. I wish it could be so,” said Frank, but the sunshine of his face was gone.

They rapped at the chamber-door, and it was opened by Mrs. Henderson, who, being for the nonce lady's maid, was bustling about with an air of general helpfulness. The landlady was on her knees before the chimney, transforming her bright face into bellows for the benefit of a small blaze which was beginning to leap up around the dry sticks placed above it upon andirons bright as gold. Curtains of white dimity, fringed and tasselled by the housewife's skilful fingers, were closely drawn around a bed in the corner, but they were looped back from the windows to admit the lingering daylight. The wooden chairs were set primly in their places, with a touch-me-not aspect; but a square table in the centre of the room, covered with a white cloth, gave token of the supper which was to be provided.

Miss Chester and her friend had retired to their own rooms, one of which opened out of this.

“Will you tell Miss Strange Mr. Grey wishes to see her?” said Mr. Chester to Mrs. Henderson.

“Strange!—that’s her name, is it? I axed her what ’t was, and she kind o’ mumbled somethin’, nobody could tell what. Strange by name and strange by natur, I say—stole away by them Injins, my Jem says, and kep’ all winter—”

Thus talking, she disappeared, and in a few moments Agnes entered. She had doffed her Indian costume for one of Evelyn’s travelling dresses, which, though much too large, had been partially fitted to her by the dextrous use of pins and needle. She laughed with them at the oddity of her appearance as she advanced, holding up the long skirt like a riding-habit.

“I had n’t time quite to complete my toilet; but they said you were going away, and I would not keep you waiting. You are going home?”

“Yes.”

“I thought so. Tell them how I have longed to see them.”

“Father will come over to-morrow, and take you home. You will be comfortable here to-night, won’t you?”

She sighed and smiled at once as she answered, “Yes—but you remember what I told you.” Then, in a lower voice, “I shall not rest a moment now until I know my fate.”

Frank glanced around uneasily, and to his great relief saw that Mr. Chester had left the room. Drawing Agnes to the window furthest from the chimney, where their hostess was still puffing at the flame, he said,

“I became so gradually used to the mystery which envel-

ops you that I hardly realized how strange it was to give you but one name. At our house, where there was nobody to be curious about it, it did not signify, but here it won't do. Mr. Chester asked, and I told him you were 'Agnes Strange.'"

"O, Frank!"

"What could I do? There was no time for explanation, and I could not allow you to be compromised with him. For my sake, if not for your own, bear this name at present. It belongs to you; for your life is strange, if you are not. Almost any one else would have taken a name in the first place."

"I did not like to. I did not realize at first how it would be, and after that it seemed like a lie to tell your mother any name but the one I ought to bear."

"And why not tell that?"

"I could not. You will know why to-morrow. All will be known then."

She turned very pale, and pressed her hands over her heart with a faint cry, as if of pain. Then she added,

"These people — my fate must have brought them here just now. This lady is the one your brother spoke of *that day*. She is engaged to Col. Stanley."

A blinding light flashed over Frank's brain.

"I know it. What of it?" he asked, almost sternly.

"No matter, now. My fate is mixed with hers."

He seized her hands with a sudden gesture of dismay and anguish. Then, with a groan, as if his heart had broken, "I can guess the secret. O, Agnes, how I have loved you!"

The low, hoarse whisper scarcely reached her ear before

he left her. She leaned against the window, with her eyes closed, pale, cold, still. Then came the gasping, tearing pain at her heart. The floor seemed to slide from beneath her feet.

“My stars!” cried the landlady, “she’s dead faint!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LOVERS.

THE cry of their hostess brought Mrs. Henderson and Evelyn to her aid. Agnes was laid on a bed in the inner room, and some simple remedies speedily restored life and breath. But she seemed very weary and worn, and her nurses decided she must not attempt to sit up that evening. She was accordingly undressed, and after taking tea sank into a sound and refreshing slumber.

Evelyn left her to repose, and joined her father and Percy at the supper-table. During their meal Mr. Chester exerted himself to entertain the others, who seemed little inclined to talk; and, possessing much conversational ability, he was able in some degree to interest and amuse his abstracted listeners. But, when the table was cleared, and Juniper had retired, after heaping fresh wood upon the fire, he drew the table to the cheerful hearth, and, begging them to excuse him, as he had important writing to perform, considerably turned his back upon the young couple, and left them to their own resources.

They sat beside the window, from which the curtain was still withdrawn. At first, they looked out into the night, gloriously beautiful, with its millions of stars shining behind the veil of darkness through which their eyes sought the infinite heavens. Even thus luminous, far off, and inaccessible, seemed the hopes they had once called their own, awaking only the same quiet hopelessness, the longing, the heart-aching, which the weird influences of nocturnal hours arouse in the soul of the unhappy.

Afterwards they conversed in low tones, that scarcely broke the brooding stillness. Of what they had *felt* they dared not speak. If the floodgates should be lifted ever so little, each was conscious that the pressing, swelling torrent behind would bear away all barriers in its resistless force. Into the future they would not trust themselves to look. Yet there was much to tell of individual action and external circumstances which had influenced their destiny.

Evelyn detailed more at length than she had been able to do in a letter the particulars of her entanglement with Col. Stanley, and had the satisfaction of learning by a few whispered syllables, of reading in his expressive face, of feeling by the magnetic pressure of his hand, how entirely he appreciated her conduct, and approved the nobleness of her decision. He hung upon her words. His soul drank in the delicious poison, bitter-sweet, that flowed from those beautiful, tremulous lips, to kill his happiness and her own. He basked in the light of those calm, proud eyes, even while a shivering thrill along

his veins told him how dreary was the rayless future, because she was too pure, too noble, to do wrong.

In his turn, he related the chance meeting with Col. Stanley; the care he had taken of him afterwards, *because he was his enemy*; the struggle of feeling he had undergone; his mother's advice, drawn from the infallible rule of life and duty; and the disappointment of his half-formed expectations, when Col. Stanley, upon recovering, had manifested anger, instead of gratitude, at learning to whom he was indebted for his life. Since Mrs. Grey had left the bedside of the sick man, relieved of her care by a favorable change of symptoms, that took place the same day his own servant arrived to assume the post of nurse, Percy had abstained from calling there. He was glad to be free from an irksome charge, and had too much delicacy to do anything that might be considered an intrusion; for the relations they held to each other forbade the thought that his presence could be welcome.

Yet he was not prepared for the sneering contempt and hatred he received when, anxious to know the truth, and perplexed at receiving no tidings from New York, he ventured to ask if the marriage with Evelyn had really taken place. The reply to his inquiry was such as effectually stopped all further intercourse between them. Percy's conflict of mind had been greater than Evelyn's. Perhaps his love for her was stronger. Certainly it was more absorbing, for her heart was nearly divided between the two objects of her affection; and her devotion to her father, and the joy of serving him, even at so great sacrifice, had, in some measure, sustained her

through her trouble. Her lover had no such aid, and the clear introspection that assured her of this difference made Evelyn look up with admiration, and that proud love a woman delights to feel, to the height where he stood, lonely, sustained by his honor and sense of right, to meet unvanquished whatever might befall.

A long silence followed this interchange of experience. They were looking blankly at the Medusa face of the future thrust between them, and felt their hearts grow cold beneath the petrifying influence.

“After what you tell me,” said Evelyn, at length, “there is little hope that my father is correct in thinking shame or a sense of compassion can induce this man to forego his claims. What can words avail, where kind deeds are ineffectual?”

“And, if so?”

“There is no alternative. My word is pledged. I have gained the precious boon for which I gave it — my father’s life and honor. Percy, I should shrink even from your eyes, if my own honor were stained with a lie.”

“It is like you to say so — but it kills me to hear it.”

“You would not have me act otherwise?” she interrupted, in a quick, anxious tone.

“No — and yet how can we live apart?”

“We *can* live — we *shall* live!” she said, passionately. “When this keen pain has come to be a chronic, customary thing, hidden and unsuspected of all, we may even find happiness in life. God will give us rest after our trouble, if he

wills us to live. I could not bear it, if I thought you would always be unhappy."

"Yes," said Percy, with a calm sadness, "I believe what you say is true; and yet who but you would have courage to say it now? Duty, religion, a conscience at peace, the power of doing good to others—these may comfort us both; and to you, perhaps, your father's doting love, and sweet child-faces bearing the image of your own, to whom you may sometimes whisper softly the name of a lonely man, who can never be wholly miserable, because he can never cease to love you."

"Hush!" she said, faintly, "you try me too far. We must not talk so to each other. I have need of all my courage, and it dies at your words."

There was another pause. Then Evelyn whispered,

"Go now—it is late. And, Percy, I must see Col. Stanley to-morrow, and we must not meet again until afterward—perhaps not even then."

"Nay, Evelyn—now you try *me* too far. While I stay here let me see you as often as possible. That man has no right which can interfere with this claim of mine to be near you, to enjoy to the full these last hours. They may be, indeed, the last. I am going to the battle-field, and who knows what I may meet there?"

At these words, Evelyn broke down utterly. The contingency for which she had braced herself she could endure; but this, presented to her thoughts in that quiet tone, as if it were

a thing most probable, unstrung her nerves, and she burst into tears.

Mr. Chester turned towards them at the sound of weeping.

“What, little girl, crying?” he said. “I thought the time for that was over. We are going to have nothing but smiles now. When we get settled at the Close, you will regain all your roses, and Mr. Grey shall come and see us there this summer, and find you blooming as a bride. Won’t it be so, Mr. Grey?”

“I should be but too happy, if I could hope to enjoy such a pleasure,” answered Percy, in a confused manner; and then, more firmly, “I shall shape my actions according to your daughter’s wishes. She has such power over me that I cannot dispute her will.”

Mr. Chester frowned. “And you, too, impracticable?”

Percy bowed slightly, without replying. Evelyn was still weeping.

Mr. Chester looked at them a moment with a lowering brow, and then, with an exclamation of impatience, pushed the table from him, and started to his feet.

“Hark you! I’ll have nothing more to do with your affairs. Your ideas are entirely too Utopian for my comprehension. Do you hear me, Evelyn? You may do as you will. You’re a good child, but you’re obstinate. I wash my hands of you both. As for you, sir, if you are so little a lover that you can resign my daughter to another, I can only congratulate you upon taking matters so easily. It was not so I wooed her mother!”

Having said this in a tone half angry and half perplexed, he left the room without waiting for a reply.

“It is not so — you know it is not so!” exclaimed Percy, almost beside himself at this charge.

“He does not himself believe it!” she answered through her tears. “Do not blame my poor father, Percy! He is not himself, now — he has not been like himself since that fatal time. He is so troubled, so desperate, about me, that he cannot see things clearly — he cannot believe that I may not do innocently what would be wrong in another. But we — we see — we will not shut our eyes to the light, though it blinds us! — O, Percy, we will help each other bear what neither might be able to bear alone.”

“Bless you, dearest! I can almost find a pleasure in this trial, that so plainly shows the nobleness and purity of your character. Such love as we have given each other cannot be lost. It will make us better and happier, even if our lives are never in this world united.”

“And love is not all of life. We used to say so when we had still a little hope left, and we can bear to think so now. We do not need to cheat ourselves with vain protestations; our trouble is too real to make us reject what comfort we may gain from the experience of the past. O, Percy, we have lived through dark hours, and the long, long agony of life will find an end at last.”

They were calmer now, and looked into each others' faces with a half-smile, as they stood there, their hands clasped for parting, although both knew they were cheating the

hunger of their souls with bread that was like a stone. In a little while Percy went away, and Evelyn sought her own room, thankful for the solitude where she might commune with her own heart and be still

CHAPTER XXV.

THE KEY TURNS.

COL. STANLEY still occupied rooms in the house to which he had first been carried insensible. Since his convalescence he had been admitted to parole, and treated with the greatest courtesy by Gen. Washington and the officers of his staff. But illness had not improved the sick man's temper; he wearied sadly of his captivity, and fretted at the many delays attending the proposed exchange of prisoners, which would restore him to the scenes wherein his hopes and plans were to be carried out. He looked with contempt on those of whom he might have made friends, and secluded himself morosely from companionship.

Thus he had passed several weeks, his nervousness and irritability seeming to increase rather than diminish as his health improved, and few had cared to intrude upon the loneliness he so evidently preferred both within doors and during his daily walks. It was therefore with real joy, in the hope of being able to afford his master some relief from ennui, that Col. Stanley's servant entered the chamber on the morning

after Mr. Chester's arrival in Morristown, and communicated the news he had just learned.

To his surprise, he was answered with an angry exclamation, and Col. Stanley, jumping out of bed, hurried on his clothes, swallowed his coffee so hot that it burnt his throat — in revenge for which he dashed the cup to pieces on the floor, scrambled through the process of the toilet he deemed necessary before presenting himself to Miss Chester, and, having by this time nearly exhausted his vocabulary of oaths, regained some degree of self-command as he threw on his cloak and hat, and turned his steps towards the tavern.

The walk of half a mile tended still further to establish the ease and coolness of the polished man of the world, who prided himself upon being equal to any emergency. But he was very angry, and keenly anxious that even by this unexpected manœuvre his prey should not escape his hands, and had arrived at the hotel and followed the servant into Mr. Chester's apartment before he had fully determined what course it was best for him to take.

Evelyn had awaked that morning from a troubled sleep with a consciousness thrilling through all her nerves that this was the day for which she had so long been waiting. Her father held her by both hands as she gave him the morning greeting, and gazed into her face with an anxious, inquiring expression; but she made no effort to turn from his scrutiny, and he relaxed his hold without putting into words the question his eyes had asked. Their breakfast-hour passed almost in silence, Evelyn mentally revolving the probable details of her anticipated meeting with Col. Stanley.

They had arisen from the table, and Juniper was removing the food they had scarcely tasted, when they were startled by their unexpected visitor. Masking his real feelings, Col. Stanley advanced as calmly and pleasantly as if nothing disagreeable had ever marred their intercourse, and took Evelyn's hand with an attempt to press it to his lips. She withdrew it hastily; and then, grasping Mr. Chester's, he bade him be assured of the pleasant surprise he had in thus meeting them.

Mr. Chester could not avoid smiling. The acting was a little overdone. Evelyn's manner was lofty and frigid as the most inaccessible iceberg. Col. Stanley noticed it all, but took the chair placed for him, and, drawing it nearer to Evelyn, said, blandly, "he hoped he might venture to express his fear that they had set out prematurely from New York, the season being as yet rather early for a pleasure-trip."

"This is not a pleasure-trip. We considered it best to leave the city," replied she, with emphasis.

"And may I ask where you are going?"

"To Chester Close."

"My dear friends, it is very unsafe for you to go there," said the colonel, with well-feigned alarm. "Have you not heard of the Indian incursions in that vicinity? Surely your lives will be in danger. Miss Chester, it cannot be you are willing to go — and you, sir, surely you will not expose your daughter to such peril?"

Mr. Chester replied in slow words, that dropped from his

lips heavy with sarcasm, while his eyes held those of his foe, "My daughter does not consider that she exposes herself to as disagreeable or dangerous a fate as might have awaited her had she remained in New York."

The taunt was bitter, and it stung deeply, destroying in an instant all Col. Stanley's imposed constraint. He started to his feet.

"Is this the way you keep faith with me? Is this the way you repay my confidence — leaving the city at the very moment I am about to return? O, honorable man! I am rightly paid for my insane trust! Fool, doubly-dyed fool that I am! — who ever kept faith with me against his interests, that I should trust man or woman? And yet I believed the world might not be all alike! You, you, Miss Chester! — I thought I might rely upon your truth."

Evelyn was about to speak, but her father interrupted. His manner was provokingly cool.

"If you will sit down, sir, you will find there is no need of all this waste of rhetoric and so much eloquent declamation. Our schemes are very simple, and our purposes easily understood. We are not afraid of the Indians, and we propose to go to our country home and enjoy ourselves this summer. I presume you do not consider that your claims upon this lady entitle you to be consulted upon every change of residence while she remains under my care; and I know of no other cause of complaint."

Col. Stanley sat down, looking rather crest-fallen, and not a little puzzled. That Evelyn should deliberately keep her

word pledged to him was a stretch of virtue beyond his comprehension, for her manner forbade any hope that her feelings towards him had changed. And yet, if Mr. Chester was not cheating him, what else did his words imply? Recovering himself, however, he begged pardon for his violence, attributing it to the intense disappointment and anxiety he had experienced in not being able to hope that any affection for him would prompt Evelyn willingly to accede to his wishes.

She replied, quickly, that her father might utter nothing further to offend him,

“I am glad to hear you say this, for it shows me you understand fully the terms on which I am bound to you —”

“You allow the claim, then?” he cried, joyfully.

“Hear me, if you please,” she answered, in a tone that checked his enthusiasm. A few moments of silence followed, for it was only by a strong effort that Evelyn maintained any self-possession. Beneath that cold and haughty exterior her nerves were quivering so violently as almost to impede articulation, when, at length, she said,

“I know too well that my word is pledged to you, and if you insist upon the fulfilment of our hard bargain, I must submit. My father would have me appeal to your pity, to your honor as a gentleman, not to force me into unwilling bonds. I did so once in vain, and I am too proud, Col. Stanley, to repeat the experiment. I am not given to tears and supplications, as most women are; but none the less do I mean what I say when I tell you that the only way in which you can

awaken one sentiment of kindness toward yourself is by releasing me from this claim. Will you do so?"

His eyes had been fixed on the floor while she spoke, the muscles of his face working, and his white teeth gleaming as he gnawed his under lip. When she paused, he looked up, with every feature set in indomitable resolution.

"You ask what I cannot grant."

She bowed coldly, and turned herself away from him a little, as if she had nothing more to say.

Col. Stanley looked from Evelyn to Mr. Chester, who was walking the room nervously, with his head drooped on his breast. His feelings at that moment were indescribable. Admiration and pity for his child, and hatred for her persecutor, tempting him to an angry burst of execrations and reproaches, were checked by the knowledge that an open rupture between them would still further embitter Evelyn's fate; and an innate dignity forbade him to open a quarrel resulting inevitably in his own defeat.

Col. Stanley's cheek flushed as he gazed from one to the other. He felt keenly the embarrassing situation of affairs, and considered himself very much abused. Why should he be compelled to all this turmoil, when he would so much prefer taking peaceable possession of Miss Chester and her estate? He really loved her better than he would have believed he could love a woman—poor, weak things that they usually are! He intended she should lead a very pleasant life; he had quite a feeling of gratitude toward her for the benefit her property would be to him. Certainly they must misconceive

him very much to turn from him with such aversion. All arts were pardonable in love, as in war; and, as for giving up the advantage he had acquired—it was an illustration of the man's intense selfishness that he considered the demand entirely unreasonable.

“I grieve very much that your dislike to me is still unabated,” he said, in an excited manner. “If I did not hope that the unchanging devotion of a lifetime would cause you at last to relent, my feelings would be intolerable. You persist in denying me any heart; but no man ever had more. By all the oaths man ever swore, I vow I cannot and will not give you up. Yes, beautiful vixen that you are, curl your lips in scorn, if you will! Do you know I admire you all the more for the determined wilfulness with which you resist me? You shall be mine, and I will show the world how proud I am of you.”

He had risen while speaking, face and voice attesting his passion; and now Evelyn also started to her feet, and turned to him with an expression that was almost frightful.

“Beware!” she said; “this wilfulness you admire may become dangerous. I am but human, and I feel this moment there is that in me which, under some influences, might nerve to desperate deeds. In taking me, you will take a viper to your bosom. I will sting you, if I can!”

“Ha! do you threaten?” he said, and his lips trembled a little, in their firmness, over the white, gleaming teeth. Then, in a moment, more calmly,—“We must not have such words between us to remember afterwards. You are excited now,

and I will leave you. I never feared man, and think I shall not shrink from a woman, though her temper be a little shrewish. Perhaps it would be as well, however, in consideration of our future amity, that we should be somewhat forbearing with each other now. I see you don't understand my affection for you, but you will appreciate it by and by. For the present, adieu."

He folded his cloak around him, and, mindful of courtesy even then, made his exit as gracefully as if it had been less abrupt. Evelyn and her father stood looking at each other. Mr. Chester held out his arms as he approached her, and almost with a sob he said,

"My child — my poor, poor child! And all this is for me! Can I do nothing, nothing, to help you?"

But she put away his embrace, as if she did not comprehend his words. Her brows were set in a hard frown, and a wild look glared from her eyes. She pressed her hands over her forehead, and muttered,

"He tempts me! — the man tempts me like a fiend. Shall I grow wicked if I live with him, and murder him some day in my hate? O, father, pray for me! O, God, save me!"

She broke from him, and fled to her own room, longing to lose in prayer the baneful thoughts that terrified her; but the object which met her eyes, upon opening the door, arrested her purpose, and turned the current of emotion.

Agnes was leaning on the window-sill, gazing after Col. Stanley as he walked rapidly down the street. A long, white night-robe fell in folds about her form, and her dishevelled

hair, wavy and golden, clustered about her shoulders, half hiding her eager face. She was laughing and crying hysterically, in a guarded, half-suppressed manner, which long habit had made second nature; but, when Evelyn came quickly behind her, saying, "What are you doing here?" the girl looked up, with uncontrollable emotion, and said, sobbing, and incoherently,

"I could not help it — I heard his voice — *his voice!* — O, I should have known it in my grave! — I heard his voice and step — I heard him going — I must see him! — O, it is so long since I saw him! — such weary, weary years! O, Miss Chester, he talked to you — I listened, but I could not hear! What did he say? How does he look? Does he love you, and do you love him so very, very much?"

Evelyn listened with dilated eyes. It seemed to her that she must be dreaming, or had gone crazy with the struggle she had endured. But, when Agnes turned from the window whence Col. Stanley was no longer visible, and repeated her question, with the most agonized earnestness, "Do you love him? — does he love you?" Evelyn found both words and breath.

"Who are you? What are you? What have you to do with *him?*"

Agnes blushed, and hesitated. "Tell me first what you have to do with him?" she said, in a low voice, trembling very much.

"Me! I hate him — he has been the bane of my existence!" exclaimed Evelyn.

Her companion shrank and frowned, as if the words offended her. "Does he love you?" she asked, in an anxious, jealous tone.

"He says he does, but his hate could not do me so much harm."

"But do you think he loves you so very much?" said Agnes, in a pitiful, pleading voice. "Would he feel so very bad if he could not marry you? Could it hurt or injure him in any way, if he did not?"

"Why do you ask me this?—why do you look at me so?—what have you to do with that man?"

"No matter, now. Tell me about it first."

"Tell you!—Yes, all, if you can in any way aid me. Listen, Agnes. Last autumn we went to New York—my father and I. Col. Stanley had been sent over here to marry me; and, if I would consent, my grandfather, the Earl of Evandale, would make me his heiress. It was that which sent Col. Stanley after me. What can such a man as he know of love? It is for that he persists in compelling me to marry him."

"How can he compel you?"

"I can't explain it all. An unfortunate affair made me promise to be his wife, in order to save my father's life and honor. He would have betrayed both, but for this promise; and, now it is given, I must keep it, though I would rather die."

"And he insists upon it?"

"Yes."

“Then he loves you!” O, the heart-break in that moaning cry.

“In his own selfish way, I believe he does; but, Agnes, why will you not tell me your story? I have answered all your questions — why can't you answer mine?”

Agnes seemed not to hear. She had thrown herself upon the bed, and her face was buried in the pillow; but, as Evelyn bent over her, she caught the words, “Poor me! forsaken — forgotten! How shall I dare to meet him?”

Miss Chester controlled her own excitement, that she might calm that of her companion; and, from her superior force of character, Agnes was like a child in her hands. She raised her wistful face, and said, humbly,

“I will be quiet; I know I must do what is right. I must go to him — but, O, I dread it! Suppose he should be angry — he is terrible when he is angry! And I have borne it so long, it seems to me I would rather bear it to my grave in silence than brave his wrath.”

“But have you the right to? Whatever this secret is, I can't help thinking it must, in some way, involve the fate of others. Why did you not tell Mrs. Grey, or Percy? You must have heard them speak of Col. Stanley.”

“I could n't,” said Agnes, bending her head, bashfully.

“There's no such word as can't!” exclaimed Evelyn, impatiently. “Whatever it is right to do can be done.”

“For such as you, perhaps,” said Agnes, meekly; “but I am not strong, like you. And yet, I longed to tell, and would, only I feared it might make trouble for others, and be

too late to do me any good. You know, if he was married, it would only make trouble for everybody to have me here; and I did not know he was not married, until they called you *Miss Chester*."

A cold chill ran along Evelyn's veins, and for an instant she dropped the hands she had been holding. The next moment she blushed for her suspicion, as the clear blue eyes were raised to her face. She asked, with a sudden hope that took her breath away,

"Are you, then, his wife?"

Agnes started at the question, blushed, trembled, hesitated, and then cried out,

"I cannot tell what I am — I must see *him* first! I have waited all this time to see him, and now I am frightened, and shrinking, as if I asked mercy, and not justice. Help me to dress myself — I must go to him. It would not be right to let him go on, not knowing I am here. It would be an awful sin! I must save him, even if he will not save me. But, O, Miss Chester, he will be angry — perhaps, he will deny everything, and turn me away. What shall I do then?"

She sank to the floor as she attempted to stand, and clung to Evelyn's dress, with a pallid, quivering face, like a frightened child.

Her feebleness could excite no emotion but pity, though Evelyn was filled with doubt and apprehension by her extreme distress. She could easily see how nerves naturally weak had been shattered by long trial, but her imagination could hardly picture circumstances that would bring this

young, helpless creature, alone, in a strange country, to claim rights which she thought could be legally established with so much ease.

After a little thought, she brought Agnes some wine, and helped her to dress, soothing and encouraging her calmly, but with a grave, sad face. Yet her manner made great impression upon the keen susceptibilities of her companion; indeed, the touch of her cool hands was almost magnetic, as she arranged Agnes' clustering curls, and smoothed the folds of her dress.

"If you could but go with me, I should not be so frightened," she said, when ready for her walk. Her voice was low and even in its tone, and she had regained her usual quiet air.

"I will go, if you wish," was the ready reply. "Even if you are to be blamed, I shall pity you more than I can express; and I shall hardly have a worse opinion of him than I now entertain."

"O, do not speak of him so bitterly — he was so good once! There may have been some mistake, or, at worst, we do not know what temptations men have, and how they are sometimes forced into evil. O, Miss Chester, he was good once!"

This utter self-forgetfulness brought tears to Evelyn's eyes.

"Wait," she said. "Let me call my father, and we will go with you."

"O, no, I had rather not," said Agnes, hurriedly. "I must do it my own way, or I cannot do it at all. I am not

afraid now. He loved me once. When he sees me, perhaps his love will come back again."

Evelyn kissed her, and led her to the door, and wrung her hand at parting with something the same feeling with which she would have dismissed her into a den of lions. Her pure child-face was innocent of evil, but there was little probability that she had not been deceived and forsaken.

Half an hour later, as she sat with her father talking over this strange event, Percy and Frank entered the room together. Almost the first words each spoke were of Agnes. From Mr. Chester the question was, "Who is she?" From Frank, the impetuous, anxious inquiry, "Where is she? What has she told you?"

"Nay, we come to you for information. We know nothing," said Evelyn. "She seemed excited and full of trouble, but preferred going to Col. Stanley before she told us anything."

"And you let her go!" cried Frank.

"I could not help it ——"

"You let her go alone! Her life is not safe in the hands of such a man as you know he is; and what chance has she for justice?"

As he spoke, he burst out of the room, and ran down stairs.

"He is going there, and I will follow him. As he says, Agnes has no chance with that hard man. Mr. Chester, will you come with me?" said Percy.

"If you please, father, I beg you will let me go, instead,"

exclaimed Evelyn, alarmed at the thought of probable bloodshed.

“You, child?”

“And why not me? Agnes, poor young thing, will need the presence of one of her own sex; and I can do far more than you in preventing the quarrel I fear must ensue. Percy, join with me,—say I had better go!”

Her earnestness prevented opposition, as there was no time to be lost; and in a few moments more they were on their way to the house where Col. Stanley resided.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DOOR OPENS.

UPON leaving the hotel, Agnes took the direction in which she had seen Col. Stanley walk, but, in the tumult of her thoughts, forgot her ignorance of his residence until she had gone some distance. Forcing courage then to inquire of a child playing by the wayside, she found she must retrace her steps a few rods.

But the idea of being so near him took away all her strength, and quenched the resolution that had been growing fainter and fainter as she proceeded. Every one knows the mysterious re action of mind which occurs when an object long sought becomes attainable, a purpose long pursued about to be accomplished. Over mountains and seas, through trackless forests, and lonely, perilous ways, Agnes had sought this man ; prompted not so much by the resentment and bitterness of slighted love and insulted honor, as by a blind tenacity of affection, that no outrage could shake off, — a yearning, infatuated devotion, that no neglect could kill.

This kind of love is not common, but that it exists the experience of mankind has testified, and it is found almost

wholly among women. In happy circumstances such beings lead a sweet, flower-like existence, of which the violet or the lily of the valley is a meet emblem. Delicate, unobtrusive, protected, "the daily beauty of their lives" yet reveals itself in charms that cannot fail to attract admiration and love. Their meekness and quiet do not seem a want of dignity, or their unruffled calm a want of feeling, and one forgets to ask for intellect amid so much grace and beauty. In other situations, they have little energy to struggle, but they will bear loads of suffering that would grind to pieces a more resistant nature, or crush into insanity a more appreciative mind. They pass unstained through evil, because their purity cannot comprehend its enormity; and their goodness is so instinctive that at times it loses the force of a virtue, and at times exalts them to a likeness with the angels.

Agnes was formed to be one of these. Poor flower, torn from its sheltering leaves, flung like a weed upon life's rough ocean, by what strange chance had it battled with the waves that swept it onward, or striven to force its way to the spot where alone it could take root again?

The child who had told her where the tall English officer lived paused in its play to look after her, with an indefinite feeling of pity and wonder for the trouble and terror in her eyes, as she glanced at the house, and then walked feebly still further away.

A little brook crossed the road, and she leaned over the railing of the bridge to think. She smiled at her own foolishness. The crisis must be met. It was for this she had lived

so long. There was no avoiding it now, and the only hope of evading the anger she feared was by giving Col. Stanley an opportunity of seeming to do willingly what every consideration of right should induce him to do. She knew him so well — his determined will, his defiant resistance of the gentlest attempt at coercion! She did not think of these as faults, but as something to be considered and expected in arranging events with which he was connected. She knew, abstractly, that he had been false and pitiless; but all that seemed like an intangible dream, and the reality to which her mind clung was the memory of those bright days when she had learned to love him. O, did she not love him still? Spite of all her fears, even then she could more easily have died than lost the opportunity to look into his face and hear his voice. Might there not have been some misunderstanding, some mistake? Would not his heart turn to her, when he saw her at his feet?

It was with the impulse these thoughts gave she turned and ran quickly towards the house to which the child had pointed. A woman was leaning over the gate of a little yard before the door. Her breathless inquiry was hardly intelligible, and the woman looked sharply at her.

“Col. Stanley? — yes, he is here. What do the like o’ you want with him?”

“I must see him,” was the faint reply; and, after a moment’s pause, the gate was opened, and the woman said,

“It’s none o’ my business, any way, I s’pose. He’s right in the fore-room. Go in.”

Agnes passed on, and opened the door so silently that she was unheard. Col. Stanley sat alone by the table, writing. His back was towards her, and, perceiving herself unnoticed, she could not for some moments summon courage to advance. When at length with a slow step she drew near, he heard the rustling of her dress, and looked up. With an oath he sprang to his feet.

“Agnes!”

“Clarence!”

His eyes glared upon her with a terrible expression of rage and dismay, and for a moment they stood face to face without speaking. Then, unable longer to control her fear and grief, she fell at his feet, and, as he recoiled from her touch, she sobbed,

“O, pity me! pity me a little! I have been so very wretched!”

He raised his foot as if he would have crushed her beneath his heel, and his voice was hoarse with passion, as he said,

“What fiend sent you here to torment me? I thought you were dead, long ago.”

She caught at these last words, harsh as they were, for they gave her some little hope.

“Did you think me dead? O, I knew it must be so! I knew you could never have deserted me so cruelly, if you had thought me alive to suffer from it!”

“Fool!” he muttered, “will nothing teach you how I was wearied of you? The truth was easily discovered, if I had cared to know.”

“And yet you loved me once! Nay, have patience—I know it is all over now. That beautiful lady has quite won your heart.” She wrung her hands passionately, and added, “Would to God you could marry her! Would she loved you, and I was dead, so she could make you happy!”

“You have some sense left, if you can pray that prayer! If you choose, it may be granted,” he interrupted, scornfully.

“What do you mean? O, I have prayed to die, but it might not be; and, since I am alive, since I am here, could I let you do her this great wrong, and plunge your soul into such deadly sin? Much as I feared your anger, much as I shrank from meeting you after I knew you loved her, still as I was your wife——”

He interrupted her with a sharp, sneering laugh, much like the snarl of an enraged cur.

“Have you told any one this story?”

“I have not. I would not do you such injustice. I knew you would like best that your own lips should first acknowledge me.”

“You mouth it well! Girl, how dare you call yourself my wife? How dare you take a name of honor? You know what you are.”

She had borne much, but at this insult she sprang to her feet, standing erect before him, and, hardy man that he was, he quailed before the look her face assumed. Those blue eyes seemed to pierce the guilty secrets of his soul.

“Do you deny it?” she said, and her voice was clear and firm. “*Dare* you deny it? By the God above us, by my

mother's grave, by the hopes of my whole life crushed in your hands, I charge you, say if I am not your wife ! ”

“ You do not know it yourself — you cannot prove it,” he replied, doggedly.

A change passed over her face, and she cast down her eyes. He noticed it, and his hopes rose. From the firmness of her manner, he had feared denial was no longer possible to him. For a moment neither spoke. Through Col. Stanley's brain a scheme was flashing, involving direful wickedness, and bold defiance alike of the laws of God and man; while Agnes, sinking from the height of courage to which she had been roused, heart-broken at his cruelty, and pining for his love, knowing she could not prove her claims, and shrinking from the shame he stood ready to heap upon her, with a sudden agony threw herself again at his feet, exclaiming,

“ You know I speak the truth ! Kill me at once, if you will ; but, O, Clarence, do not yourself and me the wrong you are planning ! ”

“ I could kill you ! — I would, if I dared ! ” he said, spurning her violently with his foot. “ But blood reveals itself, and I can get rid of you more easily.”

He raised her from the floor, and placed her in a chair. She was passive as an infant in his hands, and sat looking up at him with dim, tearless eyes, like one in a dream.

“ Listen to me,” he said, standing before her. “ Here you come with a story you cannot prove, and threaten to interfere with my proposed marriage. Do you know to what the loss of that lady reduces me ? Even if she were not — by

heaven! — the only woman living I would ever acknowledge as my wife, I must marry her, or I am ruined. I am overwhelmed with debt; my credit is exhausted. I could not return to England, for I should be seized and left to rot in jail. Nay, I could not even return to New York, for my creditors there would keep me prisoner in my poor lodgings, and I should be compelled to sell my commission. Now, do you understand the trouble you have brought me? Do you see how impossible it is for me to acknowledge you? Poor thing! of course it is hard for you; when I think of the past I am really sorry for you — but what can I do? Don't you see you are ruining me by your presence here? Agnes, you used to be a reasonable, good little thing; promise me now you will do as I wish?"

"What is it?" she asked, humbly. The picture he had drawn, and his altered tone, which now was almost kind, filled her with the keenest sympathy in his perplexities, and distress that she should have caused them. She had forgotten herself. Looking into her eyes, holding them fixed by the magnetism of his own, Col. Stanley answered, slowly, not without a secret sense of shame at the proposal,

"Go quietly away, and never again approach me. Then I shall be free to take care of my own fortunes and yours. You shall live in luxury — I will secure you from want —"

"And, you?" she said, in a sort of amaze; "what can you do — how will that help you? I should be still your wife."

That word seemed to exasperate him to fury.

"You cannot prove it!" he exclaimed. "If you persist

in the claim, you may indeed ruin me, but you won't help yourself; for I swear I never will own you! Who will believe you, here, alone, among strangers? Men are not accustomed to exercise such easy faith in a woman whose fame is stained, and with a word I can blacken you with infamy. You can prove nothing, and that is, of itself, suspicious. No man can take up your cause without provoking the tongue of slander, and no woman will dare do it. How will you help yourself? Who will protect you?"

"I will!" cried a voice full of indignant surprise, and Frank Grey, who had caught these last words as he burst into the room, came to Agnes' side.

With a quick sob, she caught the outstretched hand, and clung to the arm of her friend, with incoherent words of thanks and blessing.

Col. Stanley bit his lip, with a strong effort at self-control. He had need of all his coolness, for through the doorway he saw Percy and Evelyn approaching. He had reached the most hazardous point of the desperate game he was playing; but, if he lost it, all he valued was forfeited, and he nerved himself for the peril.

Therefore, when Frank, after a rapid glance from one face to the other, passed his arm around Agnes' half-fainting form, and repeated, in an excited tone, "I will protect her!" Col. Stanley half turned on his heel, and answered, carelessly,

"You are welcome to! Doubtless you are not the first gentleman who has protected distressed damsels."

“Your tone is insulting,” cried Frank, “and you shall not insult this lady! She has been all winter beneath my father’s roof, and is by no means without friends. You shall neither insult nor distress her with impunity!”

Col. Stanley replied with such entire calmness as almost carried a conviction of his truth to Percy’s mind, and staggered even Frank’s steadfast faith.

“I have no wish to trouble her. For her own good, I have just advised her to leave the place quietly, and offered, in consideration of our former acquaintance, to place her beyond the reach of want or temptation. But she is not contented with this. She claims to be my — *my wife*, forsooth! — and nothing less will satisfy her. As I chance to bear a name hitherto honorable, and to hold some small rank in society, it will scarce be expected I should be able to gratify her so far, even if she had ever awakened the deep and strong feelings with which I await the pleasure of the lady who holds my fate in her hands.”

He emphasized the word “lady,” and bowed low to Evelyn, who stood by the door, uncertain whether she should go or stay. Her sympathy for Agnes decided the question, and she was advancing to her side, when Col. Stanley, with officious courtesy, intercepted her, and, placing a chair, begged her to be seated, adding,

“Pray don’t waste your pity on the unworthy.”

But Evelyn declined his attention, and Percy, drawing her hand through his arm, said, in a calm though anxious tone,

“Whatever Agnes may be, she needs pity. What she has

been we have come here to learn, but not from you. Speak, Agnes, and tell us. You shall be protected now and afterwards; but this is the moment when all must be known. Who and what are you?"

She clasped her hands together, and gazed piteously, beseechingly, at the bold, bad man, whose eyes held hers with magnetic influence. Swayed by fear, and love, and the strange attraction of that basilisk glance, her feebler nature might even then have yielded to his power, had not Percy placed himself between them, and broken the spell. His quiet, grave air, and the compassion in Evelyn's face, gave her strength to speak,

"I am Col. Stanley's wife. Before heaven I declare it! — I am his wife."

"Why, then, does he dare deny it?" asked Percy, in the same kind, authoritative manner; but she only repeated the same words, "I am — I am his wife."

"Can you bring proof of this?" said Evelyn, breathless with anxiety.

"Alas, no!"

There was a pause. She saw their faces take a new expression of doubt, and went on with rapid, eager words, speaking in a strained voice, like one whose whole strength scarcely suffices for utterance.

"I was a mere child when he found me weeping in the grave-yard where my mother was buried. O, surely, not then, not there, could he have dreamed of wrong! A simple girl! and he a gentleman — so proud, so handsome! I should

never have dreamed of being anything to him, if he had not followed me, sought me, talked to me of love, comforted me in my trouble. Then, of course, I loved him. How could I help it? He was so kind to me — I know, I know he loved me truly then! No wonder he has changed since — no wonder he wearied of me. I knew so little — I was so different from the ladies in his world — no wonder he did not want them to see me. O, he is desperate now with the dread of poverty — he is beside himself — he does not know the dreadful wrong he is doing!”

“Good heavens! has the man a heart, that he can stand there so unmoved?” interrupted Frank Grey, moved past all control by such entire self-forgetfulness. A thousand proofs, legally attested, could not have been more convincing than the pathos of her manner; and Percy and Evelyn, with an irrepressible upspringing of heart, yielded themselves to the blessed certainty.

“Saved! — saved!” they said, in low tones, and clasped each others’ hands.

“But tell us of yourself,” cried Evelyn. “Where have you been since then, and how is it you cannot prove your marriage?”

“I went away from home with him. He said he had good reasons for wishing to be married elsewhere, and it was not kind in me to doubt. I did not doubt him. I knew nothing of the evil that is in the world — of the dreadful things men do, and call it sport. I had perfect faith in him. We went away in the morning, and at noon we were married in the

next town. I had never been there before, but all my life I had seen the old stone turrets of the church far away down the plain, and it pleased me to go there for the wedding. I did not know how wrong it would seem to others. There was no one at home I cared for very much. Well, we were married. I did not think about asking a certificate—I never dreamed it could be necessary. We went to foreign lands—we travelled a long distance. O, how happy we were! He loved me then—”

She paused, and her glance wavered. Stanley had approached, and, looking over Major Grey's shoulder, arrested her words by that piercing gaze, in which the whole force of his will was concentrated. He knew its power over her, and trusted to it far more than to any contradiction of her statements. Seeing her blush, and grow confused, Percy turned to Col. Stanley, and, with an air as stately as his own, asked,

“Now, sir, what have *you* to say?”

“It is hardly worth while to refute such an improbable story. You see she does not dare look me in the face and go on with it.”

“What is your own account of the matter? What do you say of her? Who is she?”

“What she is now I will not pretend to say, some years having elapsed since we parted—”

He had gone too far. Agnes sprang forward, quivering, but erect, fearless, defiant.

“Stop!” she cried, frantically. “Add nothing further to your sin! You left me there, in that remote Spanish town

shut in by mountains — left me with smiles and soft words, and murder in your heart — left me to wait and watch for your return, and die of slow heart-sickness! They told me so, at last — the folks with whom we had been staying — and I found they thought me vile — a sinner. They said your servant told them so — told them so of *me* — your own wife, whom you had vowed to love and protect! I went crazy then — there is a long time I remember nothing of — they said I was so ill, they thought at one time I was dead; but I recovered, at last, and then they gave me money to get away over the mountains, and the ocean, to my own home.”

With a muttered curse, Stanley gnawed his lips till they bled, and, turning on his heel, walked from them to the window. Even his hardihood shrank from that circle of angry and reproachful eyes. Agnes went on.

“ Even there a shameful rumor had preceded me, and all looked at me coldly. My father had a new wife, and she turned me from the house. They said the story came from you — from you! I could not believe that — you could not have been so wicked. When they slandered you so, I almost forgave you for the wrong you had done. I knew you did not realize what it was — O, no, you did not mean it from the first! Once you were true and kind. Evil thoughts were put into your brain afterwards, and circumstances grew too strong for you. But you did not know how I should suffer — how could you know? — Men do not love as we do, who only live in loving! ”

She paused, and looked after him anxiously, wistfully, as if

even then, with all the proof of his villany fresh before her, she could not so wrong her love as to accuse without at the same time excusing him.

“But you went to the church where you were married? You found the record? He could not efface that, you know,” said Evelyn, earnestly.

“Yes, I found it all. I obtained a copy of the record, — it had been but three years, and the old clerk remembered me when I recalled the circumstances. Then they grew kind to me at home — they pitied me. My father wanted to go to law about it, but I could not bear to have him. I thought Clarence would hate me more than ever, if I forced him to do anything; and perhaps, if I did not trouble him, the old love would come back some day, and he would do me justice of his own accord. Besides, my father died soon after, and there was nobody to do anything about it. So I took what little money he left me, and came over here to find my husband.”

“And you surely brought the evidences of your marriage?”

“O, yes, I brought them safe.”

“Where are they, then?” and Evelyn’s excited face bent over her.

“I lost them, afterwards.”

“O, how could you?” exclaimed her friends, in one breath.

“When I got to New York, I had found the place where he lived; his servant told me he had gone into the country to

be married to a rich lady who had great property in England. I grew almost crazy then. I thought there must be something I did not know, some mistake; he must think I was dead, or he would never dare do such a thing. But others knew I was alive, — my friends in England, — and what trouble and punishment he would bring upon himself, what a sin he would commit, if I did not let him know that I was living before it was too late. I thought, too, that perhaps he still loved me a little, and when he saw what I had endured because he left me, he would pity and take me to his heart again. I thought he might have left me in a moment of weariness, and been unable afterwards to atone for the wrong. So I started off on foot — I had spent all my money — I started off to find him. I lost my way in the forest. I lost the precious papers. I was sick a long time afterwards, and then I knew it must be too late. O, Clarence, I never meant to trouble you more. I meant to lock my secret in my own breast, and die. If you had been married, as I thought, no one should have heard a word of it from me. Never until now have my lips breathed it — never, save in prayer, have I uttered your name.”

Her agitation, her distress, through these rapid sentences, were pitiable to behold, and all eyes were wet save the lurid orbs that burnt beneath Col. Stanley's knotted brows. Gradually he had turned towards the group, as she spoke; and now he came near, his features distorted with passion, and his white lips working spasmodically a moment, before he could command voice to speak.

“Have you done? Is the farce played out? You were always good at acting, and I see you have not failed to move your audience now. If the romance is finished, let us come to facts. Where did you lose those precious papers? That much you must know, if you ever had them in possession. The truth is, Miss Chester, she is probably insane.”

Agnes wrung her hands, and moaned, “I lost them in the forest. I placed them in the lining of my cap. I know I had it on when I hid under the tree after that dreadful thunder-storm came on. The tree was all shattered, and they say I did not have it on when they found me. It must have been torn to pieces then.”

At these words Frank made an exclamation of extreme surprise, and rushed from the room.

His brother turned to Col. Stanley with inexpressible contempt upon his face. For a moment they stood regarding each other defiantly. Then,

“If this is true,” said Percy,—“and, by my soul, I believe it is,—you, sir, are stained with a crime at which Satan himself might blush!”

Before any reply could be made, Frank returned. In his hand he held a small velvet cap, and a stained bit of paper. With a cry of joy, Agnes sprang forward to seize it, but he put her away.

“You shall not have it until some one besides myself has seen it. Read the paper, Percy, and witness that she speaks the truth.”

In wondering delight Percy read aloud. It was a copy,

witnessed and attested, of the marriage of Clarence Stanley with Agnes Jayne, from the register in the church where the ceremony took place.

“Thank God!” exclaimed Percy. “Nothing further is needed for proof. But by what miracle came you possessed of this?”

Frank blushed slightly, but looked around with a firm, unabashed manner, as he replied,

“I don’t know why I should conceal — what perhaps you all see — the strong interest I feel in this unfortunate lady. From the moment we found her half dead by the roadside, she has hardly been out of my thoughts. Do you remember, Percy, the morning we left home for White Plains, when we passed that spot I lagged behind, and dismounted to examine the spot more closely. Then I found the cap on the ground. The thick branches had protected it so it was not much wet, and I put it in my breast. Somehow it made my heart warm, and I’ve worn it most of the time since. I don’t know why I did not speak to you of it at first; afterwards I kept quiet because I didn’t want to give it up, and I knew she would compel me. I never had any hope she loved me, and did not imagine I was doing any harm, as she did not know I had it. She never spoke of it, and I did not dream of its importance.”

“Why did you never mention this loss?” asked Evelyn, turning to Agnes.

“Because, after I got well, I went to the place and searched, but found nothing, and supposed it was gone forever.

So long a time had elapsed, I supposed Col. Stanley must have been married to that lady, — I did not know her name, — and since I could only bring distress and trouble by telling my secret, I determined not to utter it. I thought I should not live long, and it would not matter much ; so I cared less for the loss.”

Frank turned impetuously to Col. Stanley.

“As for you, sir, you are beneath the scorn of honest men ; but, if you have anything to say for yourself, say it, and we'll try and give the devil his due when we tell this lady's real name and history. She has been nameless long enough. She shall find her home henceforth among friends who will take care she shall not suffer except from the memories you have made so bitter for her innocent youth.”

The baffled villain had endured tortures of shame and impotent rage during the last few minutes, but, powerless to wound elsewhere, he seized Frank's honest avowal as a means of revenge. For a short time he walked the room without replying, deeply revolving some plan for the future. Again approaching the group, he held out his hand to Agnes. Scarcely believing the evidence of her senses, she laid her own within it, and as the cold fingers closed over hers with a grasp like iron, she shuddered and gasped as if a snake had clasped her within its death-folds. Much like the magnetism whereby a serpent draws a bird into its jaws had been the weird power by which this delicate nature had been so fatally linked to one so dark and cold.

“No further words are needed. This woman is my wife.

Doubtless you would be slow to believe me, should I say I had for some time thought her dead, having been so informed by letters from Spain. Since this is not the case, I must accept, with what grace I may, the results of a youthful folly, of which I repented long ago. Miss Chester," he added, more earnestly, "I beg you will at least do me the justice to believe that I never intended to wound your honor by a false marriage. I should have made sure of the event I had cause to believe had taken place, before coming to claim your hand. At the time that claim was established, I had not a hint of this girl's presence in America, or of her existence elsewhere. You have wronged me from first to last, and I see now in your proud face you wrong me in this matter; but I speak the truth."

His voice choked with bitter passion, and he turned to Percy and Frank, exclaiming,

"For you two, with your threats and your contempt, I fling them in your teeth, and stand ready to meet either or both of you where we can resort to other weapons than our tongues. Agnes, you will remain with me. I will relieve this gallant cavalier of all further charge of you."

He drew her towards him, and she obeyed mechanically; but Frank grasped her other hand, with a cry of dismay.

"Agnes, you will not stay with him? Rascal! villain! let go of her! Agnes, your life is not safe in his hands. Percy, Evelyn, persuade her. She must not be left with him, after the insults of this day."

But Agnes disengaged her hand from his hold, and, greatly

to their surprise, acquiesced in this decision. Poor thing! Frank had no thought of himself or his own vain love, as he urged her so vehemently; but that very urgency, after his honest avowal of interest in her, made Stanley's home, tardily and unwillingly as it had been offered, the only honorable shelter her circumstances allowed. He said not a word, amid all their beseeching, but he held her hand fast, and she was thankful for even so much of right as that afforded to remain at his side. In defending her position there, in resisting the entreaties of her friends, — resisting tearfully and tenderly, yet with firmness, — she began to lose the keen sense of misery and wrong, to make excuses for the past, and indulge hope for the future.

They left her at last with reluctance, when convinced that they had no power to make her see her own infatuation. The dream from which she had been so rudely aroused as almost to perceive realities was closing again around her. Again came the hope, on which she had lived so long, that her patient, untiring devotion might win back the love she still believed was hers during the bright days following her ill-starred marriage. Notwithstanding all he had done, all she had suffered, she seemed incapable of suspecting that he had from the first intended to deceive and desert her. Perhaps he had not. God only knows.

Finding all expostulation useless, Frank left her with a hurried good-by, and Percy led Evelyn away. Their parting look at Col. Stanley was met by a smile of triumph. They saw he was gratified at their disappointment, and hoped it

might induce him to treat Agnes more kindly than his attempt to cast her off would indicate. But their hearts were ill at ease, and could hardly enjoy the blessed assurance, now returning in its full force, that they were freed forever from the baneful influences which had nearly destroyed the hope and happiness of life.

When the door closed after them, Col. Stanley dropped her hand, and, as if the act deprived her of all strength, she sank down upon the floor. He did not appear to notice her, but turned the key in the lock, and walked the room rapidly, with uneven step and knotted brows, while suppressed exclamations, and now and then a groan, issued from his lips. He was a ruined man, and for a short time his mind was prostrated beneath the shock, as he realized that all his plans were indeed overthrown, and the desperate game was lost. As his physical strength, not yet established after his long illness, began to yield to excitement and distress, he sat down by the table, and leaned his face forward on his folded arms. Then, for the first time, Agnes ventured to move. She had been regarding him with a mingling of fear and pity and faintly-struggling hope. Now she approached with hesitation, but her yearning heart, full of keenest sympathy and compassion, drew on her tardy steps. She even ventured at last to touch his brow, and put back the matted hair.

He started at the touch, as if he had forgotten her presence.

“Ha! are you here? What are you here for? You have ruined me, — is n’t that enough?”

He spoke gloomily, but his tone was not harsh, as before. It was impossible he should not have been slightly moved by the feeling she had manifested.

“O, Clarence, forgive me!” she said, humbly. “You know I could not help it.”

“Perhaps not, since you were alive,” he muttered, so low that she scarcely caught the words; and then, louder, “Go, now; I want no one here.”

She obeyed quietly. Evelyn’s forethought had prepared for her a kind reception by the shrill-voiced hostess, but she scarce knew what it meant to be called Mrs. Stanley. She had been without a name so long! Col. Stanley locked the door after her, and then, feeling the need of some stimulus to support his exhausted frame, went into his bed-room and poured out a glass of brandy. As he did so a case of pistols on the table caught his eye. They were loaded, and he knew it, and a grim smile flashed across his face as he took one up, played with it an instant, and put it up to his ear. His finger was on the trigger. He hesitated, lowered the weapon, raised it, and then threw it from him.

“Bah! a fool’s end! A coward’s resort to escape the battle of life! I am neither a fool nor a coward. I will fight to the end. Then is time enough for death. Courage, Clarence Stanley! Knots that cannot be untied must be cut! I’ve failed here, but, with a stout heart and a cool head, I’ll win elsewhere!” His words sank into low whispers, and died on the firm-set lips, and his face regained its usual cold

and thoughtful expression, as he abstracted himself more and more from the past in schemes and plans for the future.

The unknown future! Agnes, at that moment, alone in her chamber, kneeling in prayer, was asking strength to meet it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE.

UPON reaching the hotel, Major Grey was surprised to find that the morning had sped, and the hour arrived when military duty called him elsewhere. Excusing himself to Evelyn, who hastened to inform her father of what they had witnessed, he went to the stable for his horse.

In his haste, he was half vexed that Jem, instead of having the horse ready, should be wasting his time in quarrelling with Nip, whose sharp tones were heard, exclaiming,

“You’s a bery permiscuous ole fool, philantering roun’ here, where nobody an’t wantin’ yer! Who’d ’spect, now, de way you spoke to me den, I’s your s’perior?”

“No more ye an’t! Get out o’ my way, now, and the next time you turn the Major’s hoss out o’ his stall for these old trotters, I’ll knock you into a cocked-hat!”

The hostile demonstration accompanying these words made Nip retreat a little, and abate his high airs.

“Do’no what makes yer so rampatious. To be sure, dese an’t de coach-hosses — dese aminals — but dey’s passable good fer haulin’. Crack ’em up s’fficient wid de whip, and

dey goes. 'Sides, 't wan't me put 'em in your mas'r's stall. 'T was dat ere hostler 't was roun' here, tell me turn out dat aminal and put mine in. Dat's how dey come dere."

"Yes," said Jem, mocking him, "dat's how dey come dere, and dat's how the Major's hoss happened not to have no place to be, and so strayed away into the field, and took me all this tramp to catch him! What did you do it for, if you was told?"

"'Cause he 'peared to be de gentl'um what managed de business o' dis 'stablishment," said Nip, flourishing his curry-comb.

"Him?—Land! Could n't you see he was drunk?" rejoined Jem.

"Laws, no! He 'peared bery 'spectable," said Nip.

"'Spectable! he never was respectable, and never will be; and you know well enough you're lyin'. You, that's lived with folks that is respectable, to call him sich!"

"O," said Juniper, sententiously, "der's diff'rent kinds o' 'spectable, yer know. I did n't mean 'spectable for de kind o' his s'periors, but for — for —"

"For a drunken hostler," said Jem. "He never was anything but drunk. Never was sober in all his life, except one time about three weeks. A man here that know'd him, man and boy, forty year, told me so."

"When was that?" asked Major Grey, who had joined them.

"That was before he was a year old, one time when his nuss was out o' brandy."

“And he is the cause of my horse being in this plight?” said Percy, laughing.

“Yes, sir; but I’ll have him ready in two snaps of a jiffy.”

The promise was sufficiently indefinite as to time, but Jem’s quickness gave token that he would not be detained long, and Major Grey waited with what patience he could.

When the horse was ready, and he had gone, Jem turned to Juniper, with a fierce air, —

“Now, you woolly-head, now I got time to square accounts with ye! I want to know what you meant by callin’ yourself my superior?”

“Well, as in ref’rence to dat yer, dere’s diff’rent meanings to words, ye know, and mebbe my meanin’ an’t like yourn.”

“What’s your meanin’, then, you black dictionary?”

“My meanin’ is, dat s’perior signifies som’p’un ’tan’t so high’s som’p’un else. When I say I’s your s’perior, I means you’s more elewated up in de worle dan I be.”

“Well, if that’s it,” said Jem, “I guess I won’t give ye that thrashin’ to-day you’ve been achin’ for so long.”

Nip bowed with most profound gravity. “Thankee. If it all de same to you, I prefers achin’ ’fore to achin’ arter it.”

The two boys burst into a hearty laugh at the end of the little farce they had been playing for their own amusement. Before their merriment had subsided, the widow Henderson came bustling from the house, calling Jem in a tone that showed her excitement.

“No need o’ bellerin’ so, marm! I an’t a bull-calf,” said her son, in a good-natured tone, as he showed himself at the stable-door.

“Where be ye, then? What you guess has happened? I know’d somethin’ was goin’ to happen, for my right eye itched fust thing when I waked up this morning. What do ye think ’t is?”

“Good, or bad?” asked Jem.

“Good. Ye might a knowed it by my face.”

“Sure ’nough. You ’re grinnin’ like a chessy-cat. Marm, you ’re a han’sum woman when you ’re good-nater’d.”

“So yer pa allers said,” replied the widow, taking the compliment as heartily as it was given. “Come, why don’t you guess?”

“Well, now, good news is news,” said Jem, with provoking coolness. “Somebody’s eyes must itch every mornin’, for things is all the time happenin’ nowadays; but most o’ times they ’s bad. When I asks ‘What’s new for news to-day?’ I most allers gets somethin’ wus’n I heard the day afore. Beats all for that, — these times!”

“O, you plague! Why don’t you guess?” exclaimed his mother.

“An’t I?”

“No. And what’s more, you shan’t now, for I’ll tell. Miss Evelyn an’t goin’ to be married upon Col. Stanley. That young woman what was carried off by the Ingines is Col. Stanley’s wife, that he run away from and thought she was dead; but she wan’t, and now he ’s had to give up Miss

Evelyn, and she'll be married upon Major Grey before long — the old 'squire says so."

"My eyes! you have told somethin' new for news this time! You sure that's true?" cried Jem, cutting a somerset, and throwing up his cap.

"True 's the book. But don't spile your cap, Jem! — it cost me two-and-six, good money."

"Spile it? It's past spilin'," said Jem, surveying its battered exterior with great scorn. "I declare, marm, I'm ashamed of ye, thinkin' of two-and-sixpence now, when the Major's got over all his troubles! I thought I see daylight in his face when he was here, a minute ago." And again the cap went up, with a jubilant hurra.

"You're the obstinatest boy!" said Mrs. Henderson. "But I forgive ye this time, seein' I'm tickled too. Miss Evelyn and the old 'squire does seem so happy! 'T would do you good to see 'em. Now I reckon I can find out what's been the matter all this time, and made my young lady pine away so to skin and bones. Jem, do you know?"

"If I do, I an't going to tell," said Jem. "Juniper, you ink-bottle, le's see you grin! What are you looking so glum about?"

"'Pears like dat young woman better staid 'mong dem aborginees. Col. Stanley good deal more 'spectable gentleman for Miss Ebelyn dan dis yer Major — good deal richer."

Juniper's indignant face showed how much his family pride was wounded. Beside his own private reasons, based on certain pieces of gold, which had been the liberal payment of

some slight services, that Miss Chester, who was the pride of his heart, should give up the aristocratic-looking colonel, in his gold-laced uniform, for the plain major, in his plainer clothes, was a descent not to be tolerated without remonstrance, even in the face of Jem's threatening fists.

"Don't fight him, Jemmy, don't!" said Mrs. Henderson, as she saw her son's belligerent attitude. "The nigger an't so far wrong about the colonel being a more suitable match, 'specially as Major Grey has been and fit agin his lawful king. But, then, he'll go over to t'other side now, of course; 'cause Miss Evelyn'll come into her property after the Earl of Evansdale he dies, and then they'll have to go to England ——"

"My eyes and Betty Martin!" exclaimed Jem, "are you a fixin' that up that way? When you see Major Grey a turncoat, you may call me green. His clothes an't made o' that kind o' cloth."

"You don't suppose Miss Evelyn'll be married upon a rebel, do you?" said his mother, sharply.

"Why not? Bless you, marm, where your eyes been? She's a rebel herself, and so is the old 'squire. They'd give any money to see Gen. Howe handsomely whipped and sent home; and so would I, too, for that matter."

But this was too much for the widow. She held up her hands in horror, and then put her apron to her eyes.

"You, too?" she sobbed. "O, Jem, Jem! to think this ere blessed war should a gone and brought me so much trouble! Now I s'pose you'll be sayin' next ye won't go

home with me, and then, the fust thing I know, you'll be a fightin' agin your lawful king; and, arter all the trouble I been to in bringin' of you up, you 'll jest go and get shot some day, and that 'll be the end o' you!"

"Tell ye what, marm," said Jem, "if I do, I 'll pick out a clean place to fall in, so as not to get my clothes spiled."

Mrs. Henderson had given but a meagre description of the joy with which Mr. Chester learned that his daughter was so unexpectedly freed from her entangling bonds. As, when clouds which have lowered over the sky are suddenly withdrawn, the landscape appears invested with a more vivid brightness than during long days of sunshine, so life acquired a value he had never before appreciated, and

"His bosom's lord sat lightly on its throne."

Nothing hindered their enjoyment but apprehension with regard to Agnes, whose future lot could scarce fail to be one of misery. To Col. Stanley her yielding temper and her timidity would seem like weakness, her heavenly meekness and self-abnegation like folly, and her clinging faith the cause of the fatal overthrow he had experienced. Their fears increased as they recalled the hardness and selfishness he had exhibited in the various circumstances of their acquaintance, and they determined to make one more effort to detain Agnes, trusting that a few hours of quiet reflection had convinced her of the imprudence of her first decision.

Late in the afternoon, Percy and Evelyn set out for the scene of their morning excitement. On the way they met

Frank, who was just returning, haggard and exhausted, from the forest, where he had passed the intervening time in struggle and self-communion. At first he avoided them, but a second thought brought him to their side. His violent emotion had spent itself in exercise as violent, and moody pauses of breathless thought. He was calmer now, and had something of his old manner, as he said,

“‘It’s an ill wind that blows nowhere,’ and I’m right glad of the good fortune this day has brought you two. People say ‘misery loves company,’—it’s well she does, for she always has plenty; but I prefer to have my friends have short faces when I have a long one. Variety is the spice of life, you know; so just let me look as sober as I please, and don’t think it necessary to condole with me. I can bear anything in the world but condolences and advice.”

“You leave your friends very little space for conversation with you, then; for conversation in this world is made up largely of those two articles. Since you don’t place an embargo on curiosity, pray what are you going to do so desperate that you feel it necessary to prohibit all advice?”

Percy smiled as he said this, but his tone betrayed secret solicitude. His brother walked beside them a few steps before replying. Then he said, moodily,

“I know what you are afraid of. But at present I don’t know as I can do anything. You see how Agnes loves that man. She shall never suffer one moment’s uneasiness even from the apprehension of anything I might do. Tell her so, — you are going there, — if she remembers and worries over

the defiance he threw in our teeth this morning. But, tell her, also — no — don't tell her — she might not like it — but, the fact is, if any harm comes to her through him, he shall pay for it with his blood."

"There will be time enough for vengeance, if you do not come into a different mind," said Percy, soothingly. "At present we are only thinking how we may rescue her from being subject to Col. Stanley's caprices. Miss Chester hopes to persuade her to accompany them to their home."

"She will not do it — I know her too well. She will not think it right, and, if it was, she could not bring herself to do it. Poor Agnes! Tell her — no, no, tell her nothing!"

He strode away abruptly, and turned down a side street. They looked after him, with a sigh, and pursued their way. At the gate of the cottage Percy left Evelyn, for his duties called him elsewhere, and she entered the door alone.

In the kitchen the "head of the house" was nursing her baby, with three little, tow-headed urchins grouped at her feet. Evelyn inquired for Mrs. Stanley.

"Wal, now, 't deu sound queer to hear you sayin' *Miss Stanley*, don't it? Who 'd ever a supposed the Colonel wan't an old bach'? Here he 's been the whole winter, an' never let on a word 'bout his wife, no more 'n nothin'. You 'xcuse my gettin' up, — the baby 's dreadful troublesome. Take a chair, won't ye, Miss?"

She pushed one towards her visitor as she spoke, and was evidently disposed for a chat; but Miss Chester declined these overtures, and, adroitly turning the topic of conversation,

asked a few questions about the baby, and the names of the three little tow-heads and then requested to be shown the way to the chamber where she learned Agnes had remained since morning.

Depriving the infant of its lacteal rights, — a wrong it resented with squalls of anger, — the woman accompanied Evelyn up stairs, talking all the way.

“Arter what you told me this mornin’, I did n’t wonder she did n’t want to stay with him; but it deu seem queer that when he an’t seen her all this while, and she come all this way to see him, he should n’t a sent for her, or inquired for her, or somethin’, ’fore this time. She ’s sich a pretty-spoken little thing, too!”

“I fear he has been but a harsh and cruel husband to her,” said Miss Chester, in a low voice.

“Well, some men is. Now, my man — he ’s a good-natured creter enough, too, as men go — but sometimes he ’s so *contrary*, I tell him there ’s no living with him, and, if he don’t shet up, I ’ll clear out — and I ’d do it, too, in a minute.”

“What does he say to such a threat?”

“O, he hauls in his horns, then, when he sees I ’m in earnest. He knows I would n’t take the children, and the law could n’t make me; and what on earth could he do with ’em without me? He thinks a sight o’ the children, too. That ’s the main use, I think, children is, in a family. They ’s great helps to a woman about managin’ her man.”

“But you would n't really go, and leave your children?” asked Miss Chester, much amused by this revelation of the secrets of family government.

“Indeed, I would, in a minute, if he plagued me to it! They 're his young ones as much as they 're mine — every soul on 'em; and I don't see why I should have all the trouble of 'em, and he off all day, and don't know nothin' about it. ‘Turn about is fair play,’ so I say. If I mind the children, let me have my own way about house matters, to pay me for it.”

By this time they had reached the chamber, and Evelyn entered, while her loquacious guide returned to the crying baby.

Agnes was sitting by the open window, her head leaned wearily on her hand, and her dreamy eyes fixed on the far distance. She was calm, but very pale, and Evelyn was struck with the haggard, exhausted look in that young face. Although they had never met, had hardly heard of each other, before the preceding evening, the rapid course of events since then had so woven their hearts together that they seemed like old friends, and Agnes sprang, with a cry of joy, to the arms opened to receive her.

“I thought you would come,” she said. “Did n't they say, last night, the prisoners were to be exchanged to-morrow? I thought you would want to see me once more, and I had so many messages to send to them all — they have been so kind to me!”

“Do you still persist in your determination to go with Col. Stanley?” asked her friend.

“What else can I do?” she answered, with a troubled expression.

“Stay with me. O, dear Agnes, I love you. I will be a sister to you, and my father is ready to welcome you to our home.”

“You are very kind,” said Agnes, returning the warm embrace which gave force to these words.

“And you will come with me?”

“I must not leave my husband.”

The words were in a whisper, but there was a certain pride in them which did not escape Evelyn’s notice.

“Do you think it is best so?” she said. “Of course, by so doing, you separate wholly from *us*; and dare you trust *him* after what has passed? Don’t look at me so reproachfully! If I seem harsh, it is because I am so truly your friend. At any rate, don’t go with him to-morrow. There are abundant reasons why you should not. You are not prepared for the journey, and you are not well enough to undertake it. Excuse yourself in this way to him, and take a few days for reflection. You cannot tell now what is best for you. I do not think he will object, if he finds you desire to be left behind.”

There was a slight tinge of sarcasm in these last words, and Agnes replied, quickly,

“You think he will be glad to leave me — that he does not want me with him. Perhaps you are right, though, now that

other hopes have failed him, it may be he will turn to me. The mouse helped the lion once, you know."

"That was in the way of gratitude, and you have small cause to be grateful to him, you poor little mouse!" said Evelyn, pitifully.

"I owe to him some of the happiest hours of my existence. O, Miss Chester, we were so happy once!"

"But think of the hours, the months and years, that have passed since!"

"That might not have been all his fault. He was so much my superior! Could he help it, if he wearied of me? I am not intellectual, and I did not know much. Besides," she hastened to say, as Evelyn was about to interrupt her, "I have been thinking of another thing that had something to do with it. While we were in Spain he heard of the birth of an heir to his uncle's estate. He had expected it would descend to him, and used to tell me we would go there and live, and I should be a great lady. After that he always seemed different, and grew cross and fretful, and said he was poor. I did not care; I was used to poverty. People can be very happy, if they are poor. But he did not think so, and soon after that he left me. If he had n't been so disappointed about that, I think he would have acknowledged me as his wife. O, Miss Chester, he was not evil from the first. He was tempted, and went astray."

"But what tempted him? His own bad passions, his selfishness, his coward fear of the world, or rather of the dissipated men and women who made up his world.

Agnes, poor child, your compassionate excuses would almost make me relent towards this man, if my own experience did not prove that, whatever he may have been once, he is now thoroughly selfish and cold-hearted. Forgive me — I must say it. My father says there is in some women a perfect mania for self-sacrifice, and I begin to believe it. But you shall not thus become a victim, if I can help it. What have you to hope for, if you remain with him ? ”

“ Still, my place is by his side, and while he bids me hold that place I may not leave it. And, dark as you think my prospects, I have hopes, — brighter, perhaps, for the darkness. He says he is very poor — a ruined man.” She paused, and then added, with a passionate burst of feeling, “ And *I* have caused it — *I* who loved him so ! ”

“ And you love him still — in spite of all, you really love him now ! ” exclaimed Evelyn, with wonder.

“ Yes ! ” she said. Then smiling, and kindling with enthusiasm, “ I will work for him ! He says he shall be forsaken of his companions — thrown into prison. O, then, I will be near him — I will work like a slave to gain him money — I will make myself so necessary to his comfort that he cannot but be glad to have me there. If he were proud and prosperous as he once was, he might think me a burden ; but I shall be no burden then, and when the world has cast us both out shall we not become all in all to each other once more ? ”

Evelyn’s proud heart revolted at such humility of affection. It seemed to make a bond-slave, crushed and trampled, of that divine sentiment which should be throned as queen.

“Poor, silly girl,” she said, “you are dreaming. A servant, laboring unloved and unthanked — is this the happiness you aspire to? Believe me, the man for whom you toil will never thank you for all your sacrifice.”

“You speak of my husband, Miss Chester. I have sworn to love and honor him till death parts us.”

The simple dignity of these words silenced Evelyn. She turned to the window, without replying. Agnes saw the expression of her face, and, following, seized her hand and pressed it to her lips.

“You will not urge me any more, now you know I am decided; but I thank you all the same for the interest that made you forget. But, tell me,” she added, after a pause, “can you not find in your own bosom an excuse for what you deem my infatuation? Would indifference, would neglect, would even wrong and sin, quench your love for Percy Grey?”

A faint blush passed over Evelyn’s face, and, after a few moments of thought, she answered, a little proudly,

“I could not love unworthily.”

“But, suppose you had been so unfortunate, so deceived, would all the love you had felt die when you discovered that your idol was unworthy of its shrine? Could you not forgive and pity? Could you not love on, through all, in spite of all?”

Evelyn’s eyes fell, and her stately head was half turned aside, as she replied,

“I cannot now conceive the feelings you express. From

the man I love I could not forgive such wrongs as you have suffered. If I endured them, my heart would turn to stone."

"O, then," cried Agnes, "you have never known the highest love! Start not, dear Evelyn, and do not think me mistaken. Is it not the highest love — a love, if I may dare say so, most like His who died for man — that fails not in its strength because of ingratitude and neglect; that falters not when its path leads through dark, polluted ways; that clings to the sinner as he falls further and further from the brightness of truth and virtue — crying, and clinging, and sobbing, 'I will not give thee up'?"

Her voice failed, and she bowed her head on the hand she held, weeping violently. Evelyn's eyes were opened to a new light, and, with her proud nature chastened and subdued, she knelt beside her friend, clasping her arms around her, and mingling her tears with hers.

"I have something else to tell you," said Agnes, at length. Now that the seal of silence was broken, it was a relief to pour out her whole soul.

"I had a dream once, a prophetic dream. It has haunted me ever since — when I felt ready to die it urged me on. If I leave him, he will become wholly evil — only my love can save him."

"Do you believe thus in dreams?" said Evelyn, thoughtfully, as she paused.

"I believe in *some* dreams," Agnes replied, "and this has been so far fulfilled that I must believe the rest. Listen to me, before you smile at my superstition.

“We were walking in a meadow—Clarence and I. It was bright with sunshine from a cloudless sky; it was gay with flowers, and the air was full of bird-music; the most exquisite landscape was around us; we were happy—O, so happy! It was like real life, it was so beautiful!

“On we went—talking, absorbed in each other—feeling in our souls the sunshine and the music, but seeing only the dear face near—at least, I saw only him. At last something made me look back, and I saw the way closing up behind us, narrowing and narrowing as we walked on. But I was not frightened; I did not care to return; I had him still with me, and there were still flowers and grass around us, and blue skies overhead. The mystic shutting of the path behind us, like the sides of a vista closing, did not trouble me.

“Gradually, before I was aware, all was changed. The way grew barren and flinty, and rocks, ever growing higher and higher, arose on every hand. Then the light of heaven grew less brilliant; the rocks changed to precipices; they hung over on either side, they leaned more and more, they met—the sky was shut out.

“Then we would have paused and gone back, but we could not. A power, like destiny, bore us on. We were happy no longer; we talked no more; Clarence withdrew his arm from me, and I walked passively beside him; we dared not look at each other; we dared not look forward. O, how dark and doleful was the road, how real was the misery!—I have known since what it meant.

“At last we stood by a river, broad and deep, but the further shore looked like the meadow from which we started, bright with sunshine and flowers. It looked like, and yet I knew it was not the same, though I longed — O, how intensely I longed to go there! — and a boat was waiting, as if to take us over. For some time I had lost the consciousness of my husband’s presence; but now again he seemed near, and I looked at him, about to speak, when something struck me dumb with terror. He was not the same man with whom I had started that sunny morning along the flowery path. O, how fearfully he was changed! and yet I could see, as it were, a dim shadow of his former self, through all the change. I threw myself upon his breast. He shook me off roughly, and stepped into the boat. In my despair I was sinking down helplessly, when some one said to me, ‘Go after him — do not let him leave you — do not let him go. None cross this river but they who have lost their souls.’

“O, the agony of that moment! I gasped, I shrieked, I ran into the black, death-cold waters to seize the departing boat. He struck my hands off; the rushing waves bore him away. In the struggle I awoke.”

“And did you tell him your dream?” asked Evelyn, impressed by the earnestness of the narration.

“I did — it was soon after we were married.”

“What did he say?”

“He laughed at me for my superstition at being frightened by a dream, and then he soothed me with kind words till I

forgot it. But I did not long forget. It haunted my days of gladness, and later I learned to know its meaning."

She sat quiet, and mused deeply. Evelyn's eyes were fixed with wondering interest upon the slight figure, the wan face beneath the drooping, golden curls, the large eyes so full of patience, the helpless, infantile mouth, the delicate physique of this strange creature, so feeble in all things else, so strong in her love. As she was studying this problem, Agnes spoke, suddenly, with kindling eyes, and cheeks flushing into a faint bloom at the thought.

"Have we not passed the dark passage—have we not reached the river? Did he not try to shake me off, and have I not saved him? O, is there not somewhere for us, now, a sunny shore on which we may rest? Tell me, Evelyn, do you not believe my dream?"

"You are worthy of the happiness you desire, and I am sure I hope it may be yours," said Miss Chester, evading the question. "But, if you are really going away to-morrow, we must be thinking of something beside dreams. I can furnish you with the necessary equipment for travelling; for, fortunately, I have all my wardrobe with me. Don't object; it will be a mercy to relieve my father of the superfluous band-boxes. When you reach New York, and are supplied from another source, you can give these to some poor person for my sake."

"How thoughtful and kind of you! I had forgotten all about my clothes."

"So I supposed; but, fortunately, you dreamers have the

faculty to interest some more practical person to take care of you, and so, like the lilies of the field, you are clothed."

"From heaven!" added Agnes, softly, with an upward glance.

"You good little thing, how you make me love you!" said Evelyn, kissing her. "I wish there was any hope we might see each other again. It seems impossible that only last night you and I were strangers. How little I knew, then, you were the angel who was to unlock my prison doors! Agnes, it must be a pleasure to your kind heart to know the lasting happiness you have brought me. Your very existence has proved such a blessing to me, and to others because of me, that, if you never do any other good, you may be sure you have not lived in vain."

Agnes smiled gently. "I am glad you are happy — and Percy. I wish I could see them all once more — they were so very patient and gentle with me, when my spirit was so bruised and broken that a rough touch would have been torture. O, if people only knew the kindness it is, sometimes, not to ask questions! Dear Mr. and Mrs. Grey! Do you think I can see them again before we leave?"

"Not if you go to-morrow, for Percy tells me the detachment is to be sent off before daylight."

"Then I shall not see you again! O, Evelyn!"

She threw herself into her friend's arms, in a sudden tremor, and whispered, "How I dread the morrow!"

"Stay with us, then — at least, until you are stronger."

"No, no," she said, shaking her head, sadly. "I must arm myself with courage, and brave my fate alone."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SCHEMER AND HIS VICTIM.

WHEN Percy came to escort Evelyn back to the hotel, the friends parted not without tears and protestations of affection, and earnest messages of love from Agnes to those she might never see again. Then the short summer night passed all too quickly for the tired wanderer, whose exhausted frame had yielded to a sleep so deep and heavy that it scarcely refreshed her, and who woke with a numbness like death on every limb, in the gray dawn of morning, to see the landlady standing beside the bed, lamp in hand, and hear her say,

“Come, I reckon you’ll have to hurry, if you’re goin’.
That ere man o’ yourn an’t none o’ the patientest.”

“Is it time? Are they ready?” cried Agnes, starting up.

“Nigh about. You’re sleepy, an’t ye? So be I. I an’t slep’ a wink, hardly, all night, the baby was so dreffle troublesome. I declare, if I ever have another, I’ll dry-nuss him! That’s the way the queen does, they say, and I don’t see why I an’t as good as the queen. You been in England,—ever you see the queen?”

“I never did,” said Agnes, with little thought to what she

was replying; for she was all in a tremble with excitement at the prospect of again meeting her husband. The woman went on talking.

“Well, now, you better be dressin’. Let me help ye. There is some clothes that young man brought, arter you was abed, down stairs in a trunk. He said as how they was yourn. Do you want any on ’em? No?—Well, them ere is good enough for travellin’, any day, and save time, too, not to get the others. You better hurry all you can, for I see the wagon a standin’ up street afore I come up stairs. I’d a come before, only seems’s if I never should get dressed, the baby was so troublesome. And, I tell you, you better not let that man o’ yourn have to wait breakfast for you. If you do, he ’ll flare up.”

“I can dress twice as soon, if you only won’t hurry me,” said Agnes, in desperation.

“I an’t hurryin’ on ye, as I knows on, only there an’t but precious little time to lose, and ye better be ready. I’m goin’ to give you one more piece of advice, too, for you don’t look as if ’t would do ye any harm. Don’t you be too scared o’ that man o’ yourn. These husbands is easy enough managed, if you only let ’em know they can’t have no peace in the house if they don’t let you have your own way. I know’d a woman that always had fits — jest the most nateral kind o’ fits in the world — whenever anything happened she did n’t like. You could n’t help pityin’ of her, to see her in ’em. It answered first rate. She never had to say nothin’. The fits always did it.”

"I should n't think many husbands would endure such discipline quietly," said Agnes, amused in spite of her anxiety.

"Laws! Bless your little silly heart! The men bluster and make a great talk, but they an't got half the spunk the women has. Jest let 'em see you've took 'em in hand, and they'll give up for the sake o' peace. They're sich lazy, selfish creturs, they'll do most anything for the sake o' bein' made comfortable. So now you jest stand up to that man o' yourn, and don't let him run away and leave you agin. He looked mighty like he'd like to, when I axed him should I call you to breakfast."

The words were not spoken unkindly, but they made Agnes shudder.

"What did he say?" she asked, in a low tone.

"Say? — If his words was money, he would n't be any more afraid o' throwin' 'em away on me. No matter, — there an't no love lost between us. He jest scowled and nodded his head, same's to say yes. Not but what he's civil-spoken enough, too, when he does say anything."

At this moment the distant sound of wheels startled them both. The woman hurried down stairs, and Agnes, when relieved of her presence, could speedily finish her preparations for departure.

With a palpitating heart she descended the stairs to the kitchen, where the "troublesome baby" was testifying its inherited disposition, by a vigorous scratching and pulling at the hair and face of a sunburnt, quiet-looking man in the chimney-

corner, while the mother was busy carrying breakfast into Col. Stanley's room. He usually took his meals alone. On this occasion the table had been set for two persons; for his hostess was very much incensed at the neglect that his quiet little wife had endured, and determined, as she afterwards said, "he should treat her decent, for once."

A position more painful and embarrassing than that in which Agnes now found herself could not be imagined, and she was heartily glad of the bustle and confusion in the kitchen, and the resolute manner and shrill voice of the woman, from whom otherwise she would have drawn back in terror. But no time was allowed for hesitation.

"Mr. Stanley, your wife's here. Come to breakfast, Miss Stanley," said the unrelenting voice; and the determined hands seized her by both shoulders, and pushed her into the room as readily as if Agnes had been one of the white-headed urchins who owned her authority.

Col. Stanley detested "a scene," especially before spectators, and he would almost have received his wife to his arms, rather than unfold any of his feelings or wishes to the curiosity of that woman, whose presence he could with difficulty tolerate, so intense was his dislike to her. His only desire now was to sustain Agnes, whose agitation he read at a glance, that she might not in any way betray either herself or him.

He rose from the table, where he had already taken a seat, and, offering her a chair, inquired for her health in a calm, easy manner, calculated to re-assure without exciting her.

During their breakfast, as his servant and the hostess were passing in and out the rooms, he talked cheerfully, without seeming aware that Agnes was only pretending to eat, and was incapable of answering him; and when the hasty meal was finished, asked her to put on her bonnet, as the carriage was waiting.

Poor Agnes! Poor, silly heart! how it misinterpreted the forced courtesy; how it beat with delight at being received with as much politeness as he would have given to a chance acquaintance! There was a flush of joy on her cheek, and a light in her eyes like the light of hope, as she reappeared in the doorway, where the gleam of the brightening eastern sky shone full upon her.

One who watched her from behind a screen of lilac-bushes, on the opposite side of the road, went away with his forebodings quieted as the carriage drove from the spot; for he thought goodness had prevailed over evil, and in her own way she might be happy yet. She observed him at the last moment, and waved her hand at him with a pitying thought, and a shy, foolish glance at the muffled form beside her, to see if the act were noticed.

But it was not noticed. If Agnes was present to Col. Stanley's mind at that moment, or afterwards during the long miles they traversed that weary day, it was merely as all his troubles were present, to be thought over and adjusted as his calculating brain could best devise. By detaining her at his side he had kept his retreat from the scene of conflict from having the appearance of an utter rout, and thus in some

measure saved his own dignity, and annoyed those whom he considered as enemies. Having served his ends, she became again what, alas! she had long been, simply an encumbrance.

His nature had changed and hardened much since the days when youthful fancy led him to plan the secret marriage of which he so soon repented; but the provident selfishness that caused him to withhold all legal proofs of that marriage from the world and from his bride was a type of that now working, as, without one reference to what Agnes might experience, he put down the faint whispers of conscience, and, hour by hour, devised his future course. The coolness, the steadiness, with which he did so, showed how rapidly his feet had run down the steep declivities of vice. He could pause upon the brink of this precipice, and his brain did not grow dizzy as he looked into the gulf below.

The wound in Col. Stanley's limb had so weakened it that he was not yet able to ride on horseback, and the wagon had been provided for his accommodation. Some others had availed themselves of the escort which accompanied him as a safeguard to the British lines, and Mr. Chester had thought best to send back Mrs. Henderson, that she might thus be sure of returning unmolested to the city. All her persuasions had failed to induce Jem to go back to the shop, and, with a heart wofully divided between her money-box and her refractory son, she had bidden him a tearful adieu, beguiling the way afterwards by wondering what the profits of her grocery-shop had been during the four days of her absence.

At Newark they were to meet a detachment coming up

from Philadelphia, escorting a party of officers and subalterns, who were at this place to be exchanged for a number equal in value of Americans taken prisoners by the British army. Efforts had been made to have Gen. Lee included in this number, but, much to his own vexation and the disappointment of his friends, he was still detained in New York. Gen. Washington's firmness and judicious management had prevented the British from persisting in their intention to treat him as a deserter from their ranks, and he was now enjoying the rights of a prisoner of distinction; and the value set upon his services was one reason of his prolonged captivity.

As Col. Stanley and his escort entered the town, he aroused from his revery at the sight of familiar faces, and forgot his gloom when they reached the hotel, and he recognized his friend Harcourt among those who had brought the American soldiers from New York.

In a moment Col. Harcourt was beside the wagon, shaking hands with a hearty pleasure.

"Right glad to see you back again, my fine fellow!" said he. "You look as if they had n't starved you, up there in the Yankee camp."

"I can't complain on that score; for provisions were easier to be had than appetite, in my case."

"That's more than we can say in our quarters. What little there was eatable in this barren land the Yankees seem to have gobbled up."

"Why, then, did n't you come and break into their pan-

try?" said Col. Stanley, who had by this time descended from the wagon, and stood by his friend. "I have been looking for you all winter. They had but a handful of lanky scoundrels there, that would n't have stood one charge, probably. What in thunder has Gen. Howe been about, that he has left them there to recruit at their leisure?"

"Is it possible that was the case? They've made us believe they were strongly posted; and it would n't be safe to run the risk of losing this province altogether by another defeat, you know."

"Bah! nothing venture, nothing have," exclaimed Col. Stanley, with an oath. "You could have routed the whole rebel army, any time this winter, if you had tried."

"Perhaps so. But more likely, if we'd driven them from that place, they'd gone to another. They have the whole back country at command, and they are good at hiding."

"And better still at running away," added Stanley.

"We'll try their mettle soon," said Col. Harcourt.

"Do you return to New York?" asked his friend.

"No, I go on to Brunswick." Then, glancing at the wagon, he added, in a lower tone, "Who have you there?"

"A young lady whom I have undertaken to protect as far as New York."

"She looks delicate. Who is she?"

"Her friends live near Morristown," was the evasive reply. "I must find her a quiet place in the house while we stay here. The crowd about the door grows thinner, and I think she can get in now." Then, bidding his servant drive up to

the door, he followed and assisted Agnes to alight, and, offering his arm, led her into the hotel, delivering her to the care of the landlady, who came at her husband's call.

When he returned, Harcourt, who had caught a glimpse of Agnes' face beneath her veil, said, laughing,

"That young lady is pretty enough to be a rival to Miss Chester. If she was only a little more healthy, she'd be a beauty."

"Bah! a milk-and-water face. Give me an eye that has some fire in it! I despise a blonde!" answered Col. Stanley, with rather more vehemence than the occasion seemed to demand.

"Pardon! — You lovers are so violent!" said Harcourt. "Then you are still ready to swear by Miss Chester's eyebrows? Did you know they have left the city — broken up and sold out? What's the meaning of that?"

"That's not much of a riddle. Can't you read it?"

"Not I. I'm no Ædipus."

"Neither is Miss Chester a Sphinx; so you needn't be afraid of guessing."

"I leave that to the Yankees," replied Harcourt, with a shrug.

"Then, if you *won't* guess, I must tell you," replied Col. Stanley, whose invention had meantime been busy. "My wounded limb — which, by the way, is the occasion of this unmilitary style of travelling — will prevent me from going into active service again at present, and I must have a furlough, and go home to recruit. Mr. Chester will arrange his

affairs at the Close so as to accompany me, if possible; but, if not, he will go in the very next ship."

"Why don't you wait for them?"

"To tell you the truth, I have important private business that makes it necessary I should be in London at the earliest date possible, and my shattered limb affords a good excuse. When they arrive we shall be married. The Earl of Evensdale has taken a fancy to give away the heiress himself, and it is for that reason we have had so much unexpected delay."

"Heigho! you're a lucky fellow, Stanley. I wish that heaven had made me such a man!" replied Harcourt, laughing. "I suppose, then, you saw the Chesters at Morristown?"

"O, yes. They hastened their departure when they heard I was to return to the city, so as to meet me, and made arrangements that if possible we might go home at the same time."

"Miss Chester has not been into society much this winter. Her father's health has been poor. He ages fast for a man of his years, I think."

"I did not notice. Do you go to Brunswick immediately?" asked Stanley, who, for reasons of his own, was willing to change the topic of conversation.

"Yes. I'm off as soon as we have finished this business. What can that blundering 'rebel sojer' be doing, that he don't expedite matters?"

"No wonder he don't hurry. They send us back hearty.

looking soldiers, ready for a fight, and get in return a parcel of men who'll scatter home to look after their families, because their term of service has expired. It isn't strange he's rather slow to make the exchange. However, there he is, coming, and so one word more before we part. I shall send my servant from here to Brunswick to fetch me a valuable horse I left there, as we went on to Trenton, last fall. I wish you'd look after the fellow a little. He's a jewel in his way, but he has two little failings. He will lie, and he will get drunk. The first is more annoying to me than to the horse, but the latter might be of consequence."

Col. Harcourt promised to attend to the matter, and they parted with mutual assurances of good will. As his friend walked away, Col. Stanley's smile of friendship changed to one of self-gratulation, and he muttered to himself,

"I fancy I did that well! At any rate, I'm lucky not to have any spies about me, the rest of the way to York. Courage! Fortune favors the brave! It might have been awkward if Harcourt was going back just now."

The formalities attending an exchange of prisoners were soon despatched. The party proceeding to New York were to be ferried across the river from a point near Bergen. Here the Americans had disembarked, and the boats remained in waiting. The file of soldiers soon marched towards the spot, which was but a few miles distant; but Col. Stanley found some difficulty in procuring conveyance for himself and Agnes. As they were now within the British lines, he was thrown upon his own resources, and all the horses in town had

been seized, a few days before, for the transportation of military stores. The wagon that brought Mrs. Henderson and others who accompanied the cortège had returned to Morristown, leaving its passengers to walk the remainder of the way to the river.

At first Col. Stanley was disposed to think this also a fortunate circumstance, affording him a pretext for leaving Agnes behind; but, upon reflection, he decided it would not be best to leave her, with her fears and suspicions roused by past events, in a place where she might so easily, by relating her story, make that exposé of his affairs which he was now more than ever desirous to avoid. While he was in this perplexity, a farmer who lived near the river drove into the inn-yard. He had been a short distance west of Newark, and was about returning home. His vehicle was nothing but a common farm-cart covered with white cloth, but it sufficed for the occasion, and Col. Stanley gladly engaged the man to carry Agnes and himself to the ferry.

Having made this arrangement, he stepped into the bar-room, and, taking the landlord aside, asked the character of the person with whom he was about to ride.

“He ish von bery goot fellar,” replied the little Dutchman, with an emphatic whiff of his short pipe. “He can trink more peer as any other man in dish country, an’ pay de schore when he ish done.”

“Then he is not a poor man,” said Stanley, with a disappointed tone.

“He ish never so poor dat he ish not thirsty.”

"Then he knows the taste of all the property he has, I suppose?" was the careless rejoinder.

"Why, no. He ish trank up de house, but he ish not trank up de farm yet."

The entrance of the farmer at this moment interrupted further inquiry; but, after watching him a few moments, as he took the usual dram before starting on the drive, Col. Stanley followed him to the yard, and, as he gave some last fastenings to the nondescript harness of leather and rope that secured horse and cart together, asked him, cautiously, after some preliminary remarks,

"Could you take a young lady to board at your house, for a few weeks, if you were well paid for it?"

"Dat depends upon what mine old woman say," was the reply.

"The truth is, my friend," said Stanley, with well-affected frankness, "I have no time to go to your house and see your wife about it, for the boats will have to wait for us if we go straight to the ferry, and you say you live off the road a little."

"Petter as half a mile," said the farmer, with a suspicious twinkle in his small eyes.

"So I thought. You see I have no time to go there; and yet I shall consider it a great favor if you will take the young lady there, and I will pay you well for it."

"Dat ish a consideration," said the farmer, slowly. "Put who ish she? Mine old woman an' de girls ish respectable."

"I have no doubt of it," said Stanley, as if shocked at this

implication. "I have been inquiring about your family, and the landlord, in there, gives them the highest character. It is for that very reason I wish to place the lady with you until I can provide some other shelter for her. A quiet home, such as she would have in your house, is much better for her than to be left here, in a public tavern."

"Put who is she, and how come she here?"

"She is, to tell the truth, a little insane. Not violently so, but she requires to be watched and taken care of; and that is one reason why I don't want to leave her here. You are not afraid of insane persons, are you?"

"Not if dey ish not wild."

"O, she is never wild. In fact, she is only insane upon one point, and that has reference to myself. She is very well connected in England, and was married to a friend of mine, — a very intimate friend, — in fact, we were always together; and that, perhaps, was the reason why, when her husband was shot in a duel, and she went crazy about it, she should fancy *I* was her husband. However that may be, the insanity took that turn. I carried her to her friends, — it was in Spain her husband died, — and left her, when we were ordered here. She was so calm and gentle that they never confined her, and she managed to slip away from them and follow me over here. I was not in New York when the ship arrived, and she followed me into the country, and there she got lost, as it was natural she should. Some good-natured farmers took her in and took care of her. I found her up there in the woods, and now I must get her back to her friends in Eng-

land ; but you see it will be very embarrassing and troublesome to take her to New York. If you will keep her a few weeks, until a ship is ready to return home, I will pay you any board you may think proper, and give you *this* to clinch the bargain."

The farmer's phlegmatic face never changed a muscle, whatever he might think, and he only replied,

"Dat ish a great story, put de money ish goot. How shall I know you vill come pack to fotch her, and pay de poard?"

"You may come over to the city every week, if you choose, and I will pay you. Indeed, I wish you would. I will pay you extra for your trouble in coming, as I shall wish to hear from her ; but it is better I should not see her often, as she gets excited when she sees me."

"Dat ish very goot. I vill take her, and mine old woman vill keep her safe," said the farmer, pocketing the gold.

"Very well. You need n't be surprised if she makes some resistance, at first, when she finds she is not going with me. It will not last long."

"If she pe wild crazy, I can tie her, and mine old woman vill peat her," said the farmer, with stolid composure.

Alas ! no milder treatment for maniacs had been thought of at that time. Stanley knew he was in earnest, and, really shocked at the suggestion, he half repented of his scheme.

"Don't on any account do such a thing ! If you do, I won't pay you a cent," he exclaimed, earnestly. "She will not be wild. She will only moan and cry. Let her do just

as she pleases, and treat her like a lady, for she is one ; only don't let her go away from the farm. And if she insists upon doing so, you can keep her shut up in a room until you can come and tell me. It may not be more than a week or two before I can send her to England."

"Dat ish goot. I vill not peat her, put mine old woman vill keep her safe," was the quiet reply.

"Then bring your cart round to the door, and I will go get her," said Col. Stanley, and went into the house to find Agnes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL.

It was near sunset when they left the flourishing village of Newark, and drove, as rapidly as a stout horse could carry them, along the sandy road leading to the river. The bright promise of the morning had been lost in clouds, that gathered thicker and thicker, and lowered gloomily, as the day waned. Now a strong east wind was rising, bringing the salt, cool smell of the ocean over the low shores, and wailing, with a sound like human voices, through the groves of stunted pine.

Col. Stanley and the farmer sat on a board placed across the front of the cart, and Agnes reclined on some clean straw spread for her behind them. The road was intolerably rough, and, as they went through the swamp, they had several narrow escapes from being capsized; but the farmer urged his horse as if he thought all human frames had the immobility of his own temperament, and Col. Stanley was too anxious to check him. Agnes made no complaint, although, at times, it appeared to her that she should faint from weariness, at the incessant jolting of the springless boards on which she lay.

When they reached the ford of the Hackensack River, her

companions noticed her extreme paleness, and, apprehensive that a fainting-fit might delay him still further, Col. Stanley turned himself around in the cart, raised her, and supported her in his arms.

“Are you ill?” he asked, with a tone of anxiety, in which Agnes fancied she detected something of tenderness.

“O, no — not ill — only very tired — but I shall be better now,” she answered, with a gush of delicious joy overflowing her heart; and she closed her eyes, and laid her head back on his breast, thanking God that, at last, she had gained the resting-place she had sought so painfully.

Poor Agnes! poor tender heart! she should have died then. That moment would have repaid her for the griefs of years.

On the opposite side of the ford they passed Mrs. Henderson and her fellow-pedestrians, and, after an hour’s hard jolting, arrived at the river. Just where a turn in the road brought them to the top of the high bank sloping down to the water, a farm-house was prettily located. It had an extensive orchard, now in full blossom, along one side of which a lane led down to the ferry. In consequence of the rising storm, all the boats had left when the soldiers arrived, except the one which waited for its laggard passengers; and the dark, tossing waves of the river, with the ominous scowl of the heavens, admonished them that there was no time to be lost, if they would accomplish the ferriage in safety.

The farmer drove part way down the lane, and there stopped.

“De pank ish so steep I vill not go town any more,” he

said; and, as Col. Stanley descended from the cart, he added, "Do dish jung voman know she may go with me?"

Agnes half heard the words, and, with one spring, she was standing upon the ground beside her husband, and looking at him, with white face, and eager eyes, and pallid, quivering lips, that had no power to ask what the direful question meant.

Col. Stanley looked at her a moment with a sort of pity, as one regards an insect one has crushed. Then he said, very calmly,

"Yes, Agnes, you are to board a few weeks with this man. He has a wife and children, and you will be very comfortable there. When I have made arrangements to leave this country for home, I will come and take you away."

Her ears scarcely heard his words, for there was a surging, ringing noise within her brain, like the tolling of a death-bell; but she read their meaning in his face, and shrieked out,

"You cannot be so cruel! What, leave me with this man! Leave me here alone! If you were going to desert me, why, then, did you take me from my friends?"

"Hush!" he said, in a low voice, full of authority. "You only injure yourself by this noise. You will attract the people in the house yonder."

"What if I do? Have you no pity? And I thought you had forgiven me — I thought you would love me again! O, Clarence! O, my husband! for mercy sake do not desert me now!"

He seized her, with a grasp like iron, and drew her a little

aside from the place where the farmer was busy backing and turning his cart. Then, placing her so that his eyes, with their powerful magnetism, held hers, and compelled her to listen quietly, he said, in a stern, bitter tone,

“Will you hear me? If you will go with this farmer and make no fuss, I will return in a few weeks and take you with me — somewhere — I cannot promise where, for you have ruined me, and my next lodging may be a jail. But, if you resist me now, I will leave you here, in spite of all your struggles, and I swear you shall never see my face again.”

He paused. She made no reply. Her head drooped a little, and he felt her frame relax, and grow heavy in his rigid grasp. He lifted her from the ground, laid her into the cart, and walked swiftly down the lane.

The farmer proceeded up the bank, but halted when he reached the top, and, after a moment's deliberation, and a dubious glance at the motionless figure upon the straw, went into the farm-house, in front of which a swinging sign-post indicated the bar-room within, for the refreshment of travellers.

When he had gone Agnes lifted up her head, and, with a bewildered air, like one awakening from a dream, she looked around. No human being was in sight, except the few figures seated in the boat, that tossed at its mooring at the foot of the lane. On one side was the house; on the other, the black, half-burned stumps of the clearing, and a copse of pines that skirted the orchard. Twilight was glooming over the landscape. From the tangled northern forest, where the

Indian war-whoop rang, came down the dark river, the mighty river, heaving its crested and turbulent waves, and murmuring hoarsely, with the many voices of its tides and currents, hurrying on to meet the storm-wind from the ocean, and join in the mad revel of the elements. Far off through the gathering mist the opposite shore was visible, and as Agnes looked across she thought of her prophetic dream. "It is the river," she whispered. "It is the deep river — the mystic river! It is the river of death."

With the thought came a sudden impulse. She slipped out at the back of the cart, and, with outspread arms, and light steps that hardly touched the ground, she fled down the hill.

Col. Stanley saw her coming. When he reached the boat he had bidden the ferryman push off; but he, expecting other passengers in a few moments, objected to doing so immediately. Now Col. Stanley peremptorily repeated the command.

"If you please, sir, the others will be here in a minute," said the man, hesitating.

"Do as I bid you — the storm is rising. It is not safe to stay longer."

"O, the boat is stanch and strong."

"Do as I bid you! — don't you know my rank? I'll have her seized, if you disobey!" exclaimed Col. Stanley, casting off the rope that moored her to the little wharf, and seizing the tiller to put her about. She had gone twice her length from the shore, when Agnes' feet touched the brink of the salt, chilling waves.

“Take me with you!” she cried, wildly, clasping her hands
“Come back, and take me with you! There are bad angels in the boat. If you cross the river alone, you are lost forever. Clarence, my love, my husband! Come back to me!”

A scornful, mocking laugh was the only reply, and the boat darted away before the wind.

A short time longer she stood there, uttering incoherent words, the cries of a fevered brain, her dishevelled hair streaming out on the blast, her fluttering garments and frantic gestures making her seem like some angry spirit of the tempest, casting a spell upon the waters. Then the life-tide surging to her heart convulsed her with a spasm of agony so keen, that she became sensible of it even amid that delirium of mental anguish, and threw herself upon the grassy bank, gasping and writhing.

This passed away soon, and faintness succeeded. She lay quite still, like one dead, and the peach-blossoms, shaken off the swaying branches, fluttered down like snow-flakes to bury her. They whitened all her robe, they touched the icy hands, and the faded cheek, over which now the long lashes rested quietly. She felt not the touch. She heard not the complaining sweep of the river, or the shriek of the coming storm. Her soul had flown far away. She heard low love-toned voices; she saw faces from which the light of beauty and life had faded years ago; she was clasped to a warm, maternal bosom, over which for many summers the grass had grown long and died.

Scene after scene of her early life passed before her. The

calm Derwentwater spread itself in her vision, with the silver mists coming and going over its peaked and splintered mountains, and the graceful outline of its shores, now swelling into tree-crowned knolls, and anon sinking to green pastoral margins, where the wild deer came to drink, half-startled at the antlered image that met him out of the translucent depths.

Then towns and cities passed along. She trod quaint old streets, where men of many nations walked to and fro; she wandered through palaces rich with gems of art; she heard the jargon of languages foreign to English ears. These vanished, and she was one of a cavalcade riding fast at close of day through a lonely valley, and up steep mountain defiles, to a hamlet, perched like an eagle's nest upon a cliff. Again she lived the simple life of a peasant, but it was not the careless life her childhood knew by the shores of Derwentwater. A vague unrest troubled her. She sought in vain among the rocky crags for the form that until then had been ever by her side, the face which had made strange spots familiar, and invested dull places with the radiance of home and love. Could she bear to lose it? Could she let it go?

She strove to call after it — to cry, to shriek aloud; but her stiffened lips only murmured faintly the beloved name. Again and again, with desperate struggles, she strove to speak; and now a strange voice replied. Rough but kindly hands raised her from the ground, and, with busy care, forced back the fleeting life.

It was Mrs. Henderson, who had found her there, and now held her, chafing her hands, and pressing her close to her own

broad bosom, hoping to impart some of its vital warmth, while others of the party went back to get the cart, that Agnes might be laid in it and conveyed to the house. The farmer had found the liquor so good he was loth to leave it, and his potations would probably have ended in drunkenness, had he not been aroused by seeing some one turning his horse's head, and leading him down the lane.

He followed, and, as they reached the spot where Agnes lay, overtook the man who had the nobler brute in charge.

"What pe you doin' with my cart, an' where ish de jung girl? I ish to take care of her, put I ish not to tie her, an' my old voman ish not to peat her, and he ish to pay me."

"You get out!" said Mrs. Henderson, with honest indignation. "Who you talkin' 'bout? Is that ere the bargain he made with you — leavin' this delicate little woman for you to abuse, and she been all winter lost among the Injines, and he a pretendin' to be a fightin' the king's battles — the scoundrel! That's what's killed her! It's clean murder, and I'll tell the old Squire, and he'll have the law of him, if there's law in the land."

Agnes had regained full consciousness, and these words recalled the memory of the last bitter hour; but memory was no longer woe.

There is a wonderful mercy in the fact that the anguish, the burden of human affection, so seldom disturb the dying. The dulled nerves lose their power to thrill, the numbing heart feels no throb of pain. The earthly dies out, while the

heavenly puts on its immortal strength, and love becomes for a brief space what it would have been had there been no sin.

In a blissful, painless trance she had lain, hearing their words unmoved. Would aught ever move her more? Ah, she had ceased to suffer, but the heart's feeble pulses still beat true to the one emotion which had ruled her life; and, as the strong expressions uttered around her suggested the idea of danger to her beloved, she roused herself by a mighty effort for one last word, faintly spoken, but earnest, and full of pathetic power.

“Do not blame him — do not harm him! He thought it was best I should stay. He knew I wished to die. Indeed, it is better so. I am very glad. I shall never trouble him again!”

A smile like an angel's stole up from the pale lips, and brightened all her face; an instant the eyelids quivered over the glazing eyes, quivered and fell slowly, till they touched the wan and wasted cheek. They never rose again.

Still the black river hurried on, with the hoarse roar of its conflicting tides, and its overhanging trees glooming defiance to the white wrath of the storm; still the blast moaned and shrieked, dying to a low wail around the copse of spruce-trees, and rising to a scream as it swept on to the distant forest. But they who covered the face of the dead uttered not a word.

CHAPTER XXX.

RECOMPENSE AND RETRIBUTION.

AGNES was dead! and it is fitting that with the close of her sad life our tale should end.

Of the happiness enjoyed by Percy Grey and Evelyn it would be vain to tell. Those calm, strong hearts, that could meet the shock of fate undaunted, appreciated in its fullest intensity the serene domestic life succeeding, and the

“Sober certainty of waking bliss.”

Years after the scenes we have described, when, by long union, their hearts had grown together, as they looked back upon their time of trial they smiled at their own ignorance in imagining then that they could endure to live apart. Taught by joy to know more truly what suffering would have been, they shrank from the thought of what they had escaped more violently than they did from the expectation of enduring it. Yet the firmness of principle, the strength of motive, which sustained them then, they bore always through the journey of life.

Mr. Chester, whose tenderness for his daughter had grown

into idolatry, died before the close of the war; and this was the only keen sorrow Evelyn endured for many years. After his death, Mr. and Mrs. Grey were persuaded to leave the Valley Farm, and take up their abode at Chester Close. The dear mother, with her gentle helpfulness, her pure, placid face, and her low-toned "thee" and "thine," seemed like the guardian angel of the household. The old farmer, rejoicing in the broad lands he superintended without toil, dandled his grandchildren on his knees, and told long stories of generations passed away. One girl, with drooping, golden curls, and eyes whose darkness was soft as heaven's own blue, came oftenest to his side, and lingered longest there. Grandpapa's pet bore the name henceforth sacred in that family, as the names of the dead are sacred; and he was frequently heard to declare,

"Arter all, 't was extraord'nary how much there was in a name. It beat all he ever see in *this* world, how much that child looked like Agnes."

Sanoso sat by her cabin fire, in the pleasant valley, until "Angloagan" came in at the door. Tamaque was killed in battle.

No one of those most interested in Lawontica ever heard of her again. Upon one occasion Percy heard a missionary, who had labored at Schonburn, tell of an Indian woman, haughty, silent, and reserved, who lived in that village, and received his instructions with an eagerness and intelligence beyond the usual capacity of the tribe. But she bore another name, and he never knew if it was the girl he

had known so well, or whether, weary and hopeless, she had indeed flung away the life she considered so worthless, as an ill-fitting garment, to be replaced by another she should receive from the hands of the Great Spirit.

The retribution that follows evil deeds, the sword that delays to smite until the most vulnerable part is exposed, — when did it overtake Col. Stanley ?

Ah ! somewhere in the course of this mysterious existence, which embraces two worlds, will God justify his dealings with men ; and we shall know that in each case, where the riddle seemed too dark to read, the wicked did not go unpunished. Yet no human vision saw the first stroke of vengeance, in this case, fall upon the guilty.

He heard of Agnes' death from Mrs. Henderson, mitigated her indignation by plausible pretexts, and sealed her lips with broad pieces of gold. Not without a pang of remorse did he look upon that dead face, and help to lay the wasted form in its quiet bed beneath the orchard-trees at Bergen. But this soon passed, and was succeeded by an abiding sense of relief at being rid of his greatest perplexity.

His designs upon Evelyn were of course given up, but he was determined to continue with his regiment, living upon the reputation of being about to marry an heiress, and the profits of the gaming-table. None could read in his careless exterior the secret cares pressing upon him more and more heavily every day, as his creditors grew clamorous. His health and strength being reëstablished after a few weeks, he was about to rejoin the army, when one evening he entered his

room and sat down to examine letters his servant had brought in during his absence.

A ship had arrived with despatches from England, and he was opening the parcel, when an envelope lying near arrested his attention, and he paused to read its contents. It contained these words :

“ You said you would meet me where we could use other weapons than our tongues. For *her* sake I forbore then; but now she is dead, and you killed her. If you are not a coward, I call upon you to redeem your pledge. When and where will you meet

FRANK GREY.”

Col. Stanley tossed the note aside, with a careless laugh.

“ Any time will do to settle that business,” he said to himself, and proceeded to read his letters.

One was in a strange handwriting, and he opened that first. It enclosed another, addressed to *his wife*.

“ Agnes, again ! ” he muttered ; and a frown gathered on his brow, while his lips grew pale.

It was from her father’s brother, who had gone out as a clerk in the service of the East India Company. By a change of fortune, not uncommon with such adventurers, he had now returned, after long absence, possessed of immense wealth, and a liver disease that made it expedient he should find his relatives, and make his will as soon as possible. He proposed to give Agnes forty thousand pounds, but he must receive ocular proof that she was alive before the will was made, and desired she would immediately sail for England.

Col. Stanley crushed the paper in his hands, and ground his teeth together, while a cold sweat stood in drops upon his brow.

“Fool! fool!” he thought. “Why could I not have known this before? Ten kind words from me would have kept her alive, and the money would be mine.”

The second stroke was more visible to mortal ken.

It was after the battle of Brandywine. The American troops had retired from the hard-fought field, and a thick, dark vapor, mingled with smoke and dust, settled over it, as if to hide the scene of carnage.

In one of the tents where the wounded had been carried Percy Grey watched anxiously by the pallet on which his brother lay. The night was sultry, and, as he fanned the sufferer, and bathed his face and hands, Frank roused from a half-sleep, and asked,

“Is it you, Percy?”

“Yes. Thank God, you know me!”

“Am I dangerously wounded?”

“The wound is not so bad, but you had nearly bled to death before we found you. The doctor said, if you could once rally, as you have now, and then be carefully nursed, you would do well enough. I hope the worst is over.”

“That was an awful charge!” said Frank, after a moment’s rest. “I heard Sullivan shout, and we went like a thunder bolt right on to their fixed bayonets. Heavens! we cut a swath right through them! My blood was on fire ——”

"Hush, Frank! You must not talk. You must not get excited. Be quiet now."

He was silent for a short time, and then, with sudden animation, turned his white face to his brother.

"Percy, I saw *him* break out of a cloud of smoke and dust. He was forming the column again. I say I saw *him* — Col. Stanley!"

"Hush, Frank! your life depends upon being still."

"No matter — tell me, Percy, did you see any of those lying near me? We all went down together, and the charge swept over us. He knew me. I saw his face change when I shouted *her* name, — he struck at me as he fell."

"Do you know what turned aside the blow, so that it did not prove fatal?"

"No."

"It was the visor of Agnes' little cap, you wore on your breast."

Frank closed his eyes, and his lips worked convulsively. His brother saw it, and added,

"Now do be quiet, and try to sleep. Really, your life is in danger if you talk. The wound may bleed again."

"One word more, and I will. Did you look at the men lying near me? Did you see *him* there?"

"I did, and he was dead!"

NOTE.

A STORY drawn chiefly from the imagination should not, I think, be introduced by a preface, — the usual mode of communication between writer and reader, in books of greater importance. Rather should the story introduce its author at the moment when its illusions are passing away, and the mind turns to ask how much of reality has been mingled with the work of fancy.

In the present instance, wherever the tale touches upon the history of the times to which it refers, there is little demanding explanation, except those portions describing Indian customs and manners. In regard to these I have followed the best authorities attainable. Fortunately for my purpose, the “History of the Moravian Missions” presents the Delawares in the graphic portraiture of eye-witnesses, too sincerely interested to depreciate, and too conscientious to exalt unduly, the character and habits of those among whom they labored. If my conception of the denizens of the forest is less heroic than that of other writers, it is partly because I have followed history rather than imagination, and partly because an acquaintance with the actual tame and prosaic life of our modern tribes has somewhat disenchanted me from the fascination that, to a cultivated mind, is inherent in the idea of a free and primitive existence.

The fragments of Indian language introduced may be relied upon as genuine. Where the vocabulary of the Moravian fathers failed me, I have ventured, tempted by the similarity of dialect, to supply the deficiency from living lips, in the tribe with whose musical jargon I have been familiar from childhood.

It is, perhaps, due to myself to state that a certain episode in this story was made the plot of a tale I wrote some years since, for one of the Philadelphia newspapers.

M. L.

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